Bengaluru Monday, June 29, 2026 Pages 16 Vol 79 No 179 ₹7

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DH

DECCAN HERALD

The Power of Good

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England skipper to end international career after 3rd New Zealand Test

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Nation

Will return to Dhaka 'this year': Sheikh Hasina

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India lose to Aussies, exit Women's T20 WC P.16

Iran warns ships not to bypass its chosen Hormuz route

Truce in peril as US, Iran trade fresh attacks

DUBAI/ TEHRAN, AGENCIES

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi warned on Sunday that any attempt by shipping to bypass its preferred route through the Strait of Hormuz would "increase tensions" in West Asia, as US and Iranian forces again traded attacks across the vital seaway.

The exchanges underscored the fragility of a Pakistan-brokered agreement aimed at ending the war launched by the United States and Israel in February.

Although a ceasefire took effect in April, sporadic violence has continued in the Gulf region, with ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz often the spark.

Araghchi reiterated that Tehran alone must govern the strait. "Any attempt to establish new or separate arrangements from those currently being carried out by the Islamic Republic of Iran will only lead to further complications..."

Early on Sunday, US Central Command (CENTCOM) said it had attacked 10 Iranian military targets over "continued Iranian aggression against commercial shipping".

Iran then said it had carried out retaliatory strikes against US bases in Kuwait and Bahrain. Tehran also threatened a "complete halt" in negotiations to end the war if Washington continues its attacks.

Earlier, US President Donald Trump on social media accused Iran of violating the ceasefire and warned of a point where the US may no longer be reasonable "and will be forced to militarily complete the job".

"If that happens, the Islamic Republic of Iran will no longer exist!" Trump wrote.

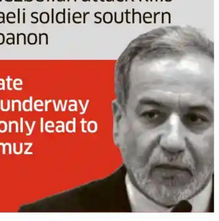
▸ Iran, Page 5

Rescue personnel at a residential building, which was hit by an Iranian drone, in Muharraq, Bahrain. REUTERS

CONFLICT SIMMERS

Iran says it targeted US naval base in Bahrain, Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait

- Kuwaiti air defences intercept Iranian drones and missiles
- Bahrain says Iranian strikes damaged a residential building near international airport
- US military's Central Command says it struck Iranian military "surveillance infrastructure, air defence sites, drone storage facilities
- Hezbollah attack kills Israeli soldier southern Lebanon



"Any attempt to adopt new or separate arrangements compared to what is underway by the Islamic Republic of Iran, will only lead to delays in the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz

ABBAS ARAGHCHI, Foreign Minister, Iran

Israel strikes Lebanon

Israel renewed its strikes on Lebanon on Sunday, two days after an agreement was signed by the two countries, which the Hezbollah warned would lead to "internal conflict". Lebanon's state media reported several strikes on Sunday.

Details on Page 12

Deepening relations

- Two countries unveil 19 outcomes
- Agree for an extradition treaty
- Cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space
- Agreement to advance UPI-based digital payments
- Umbrella line of credit agreement for new hospital
- Agreement to facilitate access to good quality and affordable Indian medicines

India, Seychelles to expand maritime ties amid Chinese push

Multiple MoUs signed during PM's visit to island nation

ANIRBAN BHAUMIK
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday pledged New Delhi's support to Seychelles in ocean observation, coastal management and hydrography, even as both India and China deployed warships to join the island nation's 50th Independence Day celebrations, highlighting the competition between the two Asian powers for geopolitical influence in the Indian Ocean region.

"We believe that the defence and security of India and Seychelles are inseparable. We will continue our close cooperation in this direction," Modi said after a meeting with President Patrick Herminie of Seychelles in Victoria.

"Our cooperation in maritime security, capacity building, hydrography and maritime domain awareness reflects our shared commitment to a safer and more secure region," he added while addressing the National Assembly of Seychelles.

Modi has been on a three-day visit to Seychelles since Saturday.

He attended the celebrations marking Seychelles' golden jubilee of independence as the guest of honour. He will return to New Delhi on Monday.

▸ Seychelles, Page 5

PM Narendra Modi receives the 'Guardian of the Blue Horizon' from Seychelles President Patrick Herminie. PTI

Ram temple: Homes of accused raided

SANJAY PANDEY
LUCKNOW, DHNS

Police on Sunday raided the homes of eight people arrested in connection with the alleged embezzlement of offerings at the Ram temple in Ayodhya. Sources said incriminating documents were recovered from the residences of some of the accused.

Those who were raided included Ramashankar Yadav alias Tinnu Yadav, Anukalp Mishra, Luvkush Mishra, Manish Yadav and Subhash Srivastava.

Besides searching the houses, the police also questioned the family members and collected information about their bank accounts. The residence of Avinash Shukla was sealed.

Police had earlier recovered around Rs 80 lakh from the residences of some of the accused.

Earlier, an FIR was registered against nine people, including one unidentified person, in connection with the alleged embezzlement. The other eight were arrested on Thursday.

Sources said more arrests are expected in the coming days as the investigation into the matter progresses.

▸ Ram temple, Page 4

Police conduct a search at the house of a relative of an accused, in Ayodhya. PTI

Lawyers won't represent accused

Lawyers in Ayodhya said they won't represent the accused in the Ram temple 'embezzlement' case. The final decision will be taken in the meeting of the Faizabad Bar Association, likely on Monday.

Farmers launch 'Appiko' protest against Bidadi township project

BENGALURU, DHNS: Intensifying their opposition to the proposed Bidadi township project, hundreds of farmers on Sunday launched an 'Appiko' (tree-hugging) movement, declaring that they would neither part with their agricultural land nor allow the felling of trees for the ambitious development plan. The protest, held near Byramangala, saw farmers hugging trees and raising slogans in defence of their land and the environment. The demonstrators alleged that nearly 1.5 million trees could be affected if the project goes ahead and accused the government of pursuing contradictory environmental policies.

Details on Page 4

Man held for 'links' to gold smuggling syndicate

PRAJWAL D'SOUZA
BENGALURU, DHNS

A 60-year-old man flying into Bengaluru from Dubai has been arrested with nearly 2 kg of 24-carat gold concealed in paste form in five specially-prepared undergarments.

What's more, subsequent searches of his homes in Bengaluru and Chennai yielded significant amounts of gold, silver and cash in Indian and foreign currency, officials said.

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), which arrested Veerappa Shanmuga Reddy on June 25, suspects he is part of a well-entrenched syndicate, not just a gold-smuggling courier.

DRI authorities interrogated Reddy and are verifying his background, sources said. Acting on specific intelligence, officials from the DRI's Bengaluru Zonal Unit intercepted Reddy at the KIA.

▸ Gold, Page 4

The gold concealed in undergarments. PHOTO/DRI

STARTUP STARS

Starting today, DH brings you **'Startup Stars',** a weekly series showcasing success stories from India's buzzy startup ecosystem. In the coming days, founders from some of the well-known and emerging startups will share insights from their journey – the highs and lows; risks and rewards – and what it takes to make it big. Stay tuned for a closer peek into the startup world.

P.10

Staff crunch hinders NCB functioning

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The government has declared a war on drugs, but the country's premier anti-drug trafficking agency, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), does not operate at full strength as nearly one in every third post remains vacant.

The NCB annual report for 2025 lays bare the human resources crunch at the agency, with 507 of the 1,630 sanctioned posts remaining vacant. As of December 31, 2025, the report said only 1,123 personnel are on the job. Among 38 posts for law officers, only one is filled, while for cyber-related jobs, all seven posts remain vacant.

While a Deputy Legal Advisor is in place, posts of all 21 public prosecutors, 15 senior public prosecutors and a Deputy Director (Law) remain vacant.

The NCB is advancing strategic roadmaps to establish a Directorate of Prosecution and an Intelligence Data Fusion Centre to modernise its digital enforcement and legal oversight capabilities.

With drug traffickers turning to cyberspace, none of the positions — Assistant Director (Cyber), System Analyst, three posts of Superintendent (Cyber) and two programmers — were filled, highlighting a "gap" in NCB's digital enforcement capabilities.

▸ NCB, Page 5

Officials of the NCB after busting a drug trafficking network. PTI FILE

A woman uses a fan to shelter from the sun outside the Colosseum during a heatwave in Rome, Italy, on Sunday. REUTERS

More than 1.3k excess deaths in Europe heatwave: WHO

GENEVA, AFP: The WHO said Sunday that over 1,300 excess deaths had been recorded in Europe since June 21 in connection with the record-breaking heatwave roasting much of the continent.

Tens of millions have been braving a weekend of extreme temperatures in Europe as a deadly heatwave moves eastwards, with some countries announcing rising death tolls.

On Sunday, French health officials said there had been around 1,000 more deaths than expected in that country since Wednesday.

Details on Page 12

Quickly

Cabinet reshuffle buzz gains momentum

A reshuffle in the council of ministers of the Modi government seems imminent, with indications from the top echelons of the ruling dispensation that the exercise may be carried out anytime from now – possibly before the Monsoon session of Parliament begins.

Details on Page 8

'Malware spreading through WhatsApp web'

WhatsApp web and desktop users are being targeted by a large-scale malware distribution campaign that could give criminals unauthorised access and compromise their devices, national cybersecurity watchdog CertIn said in a note. The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team has warned WhatsApp web and desktop users to be cautious of any attachments.

Details on Page 13

Gutka, pan masala to be banned if intoxicants found: CM

In a major announcement, Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said on Sunday that there would be a ban on gutka and pan masala in Karnataka if they contained banned intoxicants. "It has come to my attention that intoxicating substances are being mixed into pan masala, gutka, arecanut and other products, engineered to give a drug-like 'high'. If this is indeed true, the sale of pan masala, gutka and chewing tobacco products will be banned," the CM said.

Details on Page 4

B'luru tops in straight road crashes in 2024

Bengaluru witnessed the highest number of road accidents on straight roads and due to over-speeding among India's million-plus cities in 2024, according to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. The city reported a staggering 4,161 accidents on straight roads, resulting in 766 deaths.

Details on Page 4

Every rupee reaches beneficiaries now: Shah

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said future historians would divide the country's journey into two phases – before 2014 and after 2014 – and asserted every rupee released by the Modi government reaches the beneficiaries in full.

Registered sale deeds can't be lightly disregarded: SC

ASHISH TRIPATHI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

In a ruling that strengthens the legal sanctity of registered property documents, the Supreme Court has held that a registered conveyance deed cannot be lightly disregarded on the basis of conjectures or insignificant discrepancies.

A conveyance deed is a legal document that acts as evidence of transfer of ownership of a property from one party to another. The deed is executed at the time of sale or transfer of immovable property.

In a matter related to a sale deed executed 69 years ago, a bench of Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and N V Anjaria said the burden of disproving such a document lies heavily on the party challenging it, which can be discharged only through clear and convincing evidence of fraud or other fundamental defects.

▸ Property, Page 4

FOUNDATION LAID

2.2-km Hebbal short-tunnel road will be toll-free: CM

BENGALURU, DHNS

Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Sunday laid the foundation stone for a 2.2-km tunnel road between Mehkri Circle and Hebbal to ease congestion at one of Bengaluru's busiest traffic junctions.

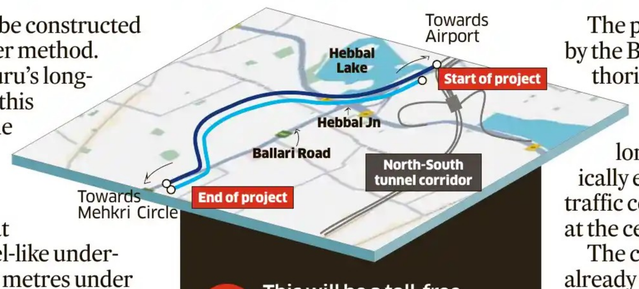
Shivakumar described the project as an "interim measure" and "different" from the proposed 17-km Hebbal-Silk Board tunnel road, which is expected to take longer time to materialise.

The short tunnel — estimated to cost Rs 1,139.67 crore — will be taken up by Hyderabad-based construction firm Rithwik Projects Ltd in partnership with AMR India Ltd.

The tunnel will have six lanes and will be toll-free. It will be constructed using the cut-and-cover method.

This will be Bengaluru's longest tunnel road under this method, overtaking the underpass being built by the NHAI near the Yelahanka Air Force Station. That 320-metre-long tunnel-like underpass will run about six metres under the surface.

As per the drawings, the short tunnel will pass under a railway line and the down ramp of Hebbal flyover, and next to Hebbal lake. Portions of Ballari Road will also be dug up to make way for the tunnel road, likely resulting in traffic congestion in the coming months.



"This will be a toll-free tunnel. Our government's long-term goal is to systematically ease Bengaluru's worsening traffic congestion. We are working to improve people's lives and are planning infrastructure for the next 50 years.

D K SHIVAKUMAR, Chief Minister

The project will entirely be funded by the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA).

"This will be a toll-free tunnel. Our government's long-term goal is to systematically ease Bengaluru's worsening traffic congestion," Shivakumar said at the ceremony.

The construction firm, which has already started soil investigation surveys along the alignment, is expected to start full-fledged groundwork in a week, officials said.

Separately, the foundation stone for a flyover proposed to link the short tunnel is expected to be laid in a month's time, officials said.

▸ Short tunnel, Page 5

MP slams short tunnel project, P2

The proposed site of the short tunnel road between the Hebbal flyover and UAS staff quarters. DH PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

'Tombstone of scientific urban planning': MP slams short Hebbal tunnel

Says project will only worsen traffic, not ease it

BENGALURU, DHNS

Bangalore South MP LS Tejasvi Surya has opposed the state government's Rs 1,139-crore Mehkri Circle-Hebbal tunnel road project, calling it an "unscientific" solution that will fail to address Bengaluru's traffic woes.

Tejasvi Surya

"Mr Chief Minister, you have not laid a foundation stone today. You have laid the tombstone of scientific urban planning in Bengaluru," Surya said in a post on X.

The BJP MP said the government's own Detailed Project Report (DPR) acknowledges that the proposed 2.2-km tunnel would be saturated from the day it opens.

"Not five years later. Not ten years later. Day One. If the project's own report says it will begin its life in a traffic jam, then who exactly is this project for? Certainly not commuters," he said.

Surya claimed there was a growing perception among Bengalureans that the project would benefit only a privileged few while the entire city bears its cost.

"This project seems designed to make life easier for a privileged few — the VIPs of Sadashivanagar, including the chief minister, and the city's elite who use this corridor to reach the airport — while ordinary taxpayers across Bengaluru foot the bill," he said.

He also alleged that "the primary beneficiaries of this project will be the contractors who will reroute large kickbacks to the Congress' funds".

The MP urged the government to prioritise public transport instead and fast-track the proposed Red Line metro.

"If the government genuinely wanted to reduce congestion, it would have fast-tracked the Red Line Metro.

"Public transport is the only proven long-term solution for Bengaluru. Flyovers have failed. Tunnels will fail too," the MP said.

Metro Phase 3 double-decker 'economically unsound': IISc

Study says elevated road lowers project's viability

BENGALURU, DHNS

A study by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) has questioned the viability of the proposed double-decker road integrated with Namma Metro's Phase 3, concluding that the project delivers a low Economic Internal Rate of Return (EIRR) while undermining the core objectives of metro investments.

The technical report, prepared by Prof Ashish Verma of IISc, estimates the EIRR for Phase 3 at 9.07% with the double-decker component is well below the accepted benchmark of 14%. In contrast, the report says the EIRR rises to 18% if the elevated road component is removed.

Ashish Verma

The EIRR is a financial metric used to assess the broader socio-economic viability of infrastructure projects.

Prof Verma presented the findings during an interactive session on 'Implications of Metro Double-Decker and Elevated Corridors on Bengaluru's Mobility and Environment' on Sunday. The event was organised by Civic Bangalore and Bengaluru Praja Vedike.

According to the report, adding an elevated road beneath the metro corridor would encourage commuters to shift away from public transport instead of towards it. Daily ridership on the two Phase 3 corridors is projected to decline from 8.09 lakh passengers under a metro-only scenario to 7.98 lakh after the introduction of the double-decker facility.

The study also projects an increase in the use of private vehicles. Car usage is expected to rise by 3.8%, two-wheelers by 1.28%, and auto-rickshaws and taxis by 2.8%, while the mode share of the metro and buses is projected to decline by 1.4% and 6.4%, respectively.

"This modal shift results in higher vehicle kilometres travelled (VKT), greater congestion and increased emissions," Verma said.

On the financial front, the study estimates that incorporating the double-decker into Phase 3 would increase the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited's (BMRCL) capital expenditure by Rs 2,863.53 crore. The additional cost is attributed to larger piers, deeper foundations, expanded station structures and higher multimodal integration costs. The report describes the proposal as economically unsound.

The report, which has been submitted to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), also estimates that the project would increase fuel consumption by 7,023 litres a day, translating into an additional fuel bill of around Rs 6.45 lakh daily.

During the session, residents of Indiranagar and JP Nagar made presentations highlighting the impact of the proposed elevated corridors on mobility and the environment in their neighbourhoods.

Residents of Indiranagar expressed concerns over the proposed elevated corridor linking Old Madras Road and Hosur Road. Those from JP Nagar objected to the plan to bring the double-decker alignment down near the 'T' Junction on Bannerghatta Road, arguing that it would worsen traffic congestion.

The IISc report appears to contradict an interim report by RITES Ltd, which pegged the EIRR for Phase 3 at 15.9% with the double-decker component. RITES reassessed the EIRR after MoHUA raised concerns over material changes to the original project structure.

When the Centre approved Phase 3 on September 13, 2024, the project did not include a double-decker viaduct. The state government later proposed adding double-decker corridors at an additional cost of Rs 9,700 crore, arguing that they would eliminate the need for future road widening.

The RITES report concluded that the EIRR would be 15.9% with the double-decker, compared with the original estimate of 17.04% without it. The feasibility-cum-Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the double-decker had estimated the EIRR at 16.5%.

Residents flag concerns

Indiranagar: Residents opposed the proposed elevated corridor linking Old Madras Road and Hosur Road, citing its impact on neighbourhood mobility and the environment.

JP Nagar: Residents objected to bringing the double-decker alignment down near the 'T' Junction on Bannerghatta Road, saying it would aggravate traffic congestion.

BMRCL MD goes on leave

BENGALURU, DHNS: J Ravishankar, the Managing Director of Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL), has gone on leave for an unspecified number of days, informed sources told *DH* on Sunday.

The development comes after metro services were shut on a key section of the Purple Line for over five hours on June 23, followed by a 17-minute delay in train operations on the same stretch two days later.

On June 26, a labourer was electrocuted during pit excavation for pillar lighting near the Trinity metro station.

The sources did not specify if these developments were interconnected.

Ravishankar, a 2001-batch IAS officer and a Bengaluru native, has helmed the BMRCL for less than a year. A dentist by training, he took office in August last year, just before the opening of the Yellow Line.

Byatarayanapura MLA Krishna Byre Gowda assumed charge as the Greater Bengaluru Development Minister earlier this month and conducted a detailed review of the metro project.

Lorry driver killed after ramming into moving Canter

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 50-year-old logistics lorry driver was killed on Sunday morning after his speeding vehicle rammed into a moving Canter on NICE Road under the Electronics City traffic police station limits, officials said.

Police stated that Ramaraju was driving the lorry at a high speed from the Tumakuru side around 3 am. As it neared the Bannerghatta turn on NICE Road, he crashed into the rear end of a Canter moving ahead of him.

The impact of the collision was so severe that the front portion of Ramaraju's truck was completely mangled, crushing him inside.

He died on the spot due to severe injuries.

Upon receiving information about the accident, the Electronics City traffic police rushed to the spot, cleared the wreckage to ease traffic flow and registered a case.

A search is underway to track down the Canter and its driver, a police officer said.

West Corpn issues notices to basement businesses, seeks to free parking space

SNEHA RAMESH
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Bengaluru West City Corporation (BWCC) has begun issuing notices to businesses in building basements to prevent roadside parking and unauthorised occupation.

The corporation aims to clear these businesses to make way for vehicle parking.

Senior BWCC officials said it was important to crack down on such establishments since they were disrupting traffic movement and causing problems on the road.

"Many establishments on busy commercial roads like New BEL Road have a basement but would have rented them out to other businesses or would be using them as a godown to store goods," a senior BWCC official said. "As a result, the vehicles of their customers flow out onto the roads, leading to traffic jams."

Running businesses in basements is a violation of the building bylaws under the Karnataka Municipal Corporation Act, 1976.

Many establishments provide valet parking to customers, and this is causing problems for residents around the area.

"The valet parking guys tend to get the vehicles inside into residential areas and park them in front of our houses," said Manoj K, a resident of Sanjeevappa Colony near New BEL Road. "This causes disturbance for residents and converts the residential areas into busy lanes."

Senior traffic officials also said freeing up basements for parking would significantly reduce traffic snarls.

"Even if customers park for an hour, it gets difficult to manage since a significant portion of the road gets occupied," a senior traffic official said. "Many times, one of the lanes on the roads is occupied with such parking, resulting in narrowed roads, which eventually leads to traffic snarls."

However, this is not the first time the corporations have tried removing businesses from basements.

In 2025, GBA Chief Commissioner M Maheshwar Rao had directed officials to take similar measures. Yet, hardly any shops were vacated from the basements.

Surprisingly, many of these shops in basements have also been awarded trade licences.

"Sadly, our officials have granted trade licences to a few establishments. We will have to revoke it before taking action against them," a senior BWCC official revealed.

Police probe murder angle in woman's death

BENGALURU, DHNS: Jigani police in southern Bengaluru have launched an investigation after the suspicious death of a woman aged 30 proved to be murder following the post-mortem.

On June 17, police found the decomposed body of Akshata Indaragi at her rented home in Jigani. The house is owned by a local municipal councillor.

Police reached the scene after neighbours reported a foul stench emanating from the house, which had remained locked for three days. They registered an Unnatural Death Report (UDR) and ordered a post-mortem.

The post-mortem report, which came recently, established that the woman had been assaulted and strangled. CCTV footage also surfaced, showing a man identified as Nanne Saab leaving the house. He remains missing. Police said he lived with the victim. Saab and Akshata had been married to different people. Six months ago, she left her husband and two children, and moved in with Saab to live in Jigani and look for work in a garment factory.

While police have launched a search for Saab, some Hindu right wing activists staged a protest on June 27, alleging that he had lured Akshata and then murdered her.

Canter cleaner run over by speeding car on highway near Devanahalli, dies

BENGALURU, DHNS: A Canter cleaner from Rajasthan was killed after a speeding car rammed into him on National Highway 44 near Devanahalli on Saturday night.

At 9 pm, as 38-year-old Badrilal Dariya stood by the highway edge waiting to cross, a car coming from the Bengaluru side struck him near Lalagondanahalli Gate.

The car that was involved in the accident.

Badrilal, who had stepped out to get tea, died of his injuries.

Badrilal worked as a cleaner alongside lorry driver Shareeb Mohammed, also from Rajasthan. The two had driven to Bengaluru to deliver garlic at the Yeshwantpur Market. After unloading the bags, they drove to Kolar to load mangoes for the return journey.

On the way back, they parked the Canter near Lalagondanahalli Gate, close to Devanahalli Rani Cross, for a break. At 8.45 pm, Badrilal stepped out to buy tea when the accident happened.

Hearing the commotion, Mohammed rushed to the spot and found Badrilal severely injured. He was immediately taken to a hospital but did not respond to treatment and was pronounced dead.

The Devanahalli traffic police visited the scene, conducted a preliminary inspection and registered a case. They confirmed that the Innova Crysta involved in the accident has been seized and driver Mithilesh M has been taken into custody.

Massive blaze at chemical factory; no casualties

BENGALURU, DHNS: A massive fire broke out at a chemical factory in Electronics City, but no casualties were reported.

At 5.13 pm, the fire department received an alert about a massive blaze tearing through the factory located near the Shell petrol station on Jigani Link Road and dispatched four fire tenders, an official said.

The factory — Divya Exports and Imports — belongs to one Harinath and manufactures chemical thinners, an officer from the jurisdictional Hebbagodi police station said.

Since it was a Sunday, there were no workers at the factory, police said.

Police were at the scene to assist firefighters and contain the blaze. Visuals of thick black smoke bellowing from the building were widely shared on social media.

Police have launched an investigation to ascertain the cause of the fire.

Thick smoke billows from the chemical factory in Electronics City on Sunday. PHOTO: NIKET RAJ DWIVEDI (X)

The 157-year-old Bangalore Club on Sunday conducted elections for the General Committee for 2026-27. Seated (L-R): Suman Ranganath (Committee Member), Vikram Bihani (Vice-President), Pradeep M Rao (President), Adithya BV Setty (Committee Member), and Virina Subbaiah (Committee Member). Standing (L-R): Hemanth Manay C (Committee Member), Prithvi Padmanabhan (Committee Member), Kishore Rao (Committee Member), and Shardendu Malpani (Committee Member).

MILESTONE

BDA's 12-hr sapling drive earns Guinness record

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) entered the Guinness World Records on Sunday after planting close to 15 lakh native saplings across the city within 12 hours.

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar announced the record under the 'Most plants planted by a team in 12 hours' category.

Adjudicator Rishi Nath presented the certificate to Shivakumar and BDA Chairman NA Haris in the presence of Greater Bengaluru Development Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, Energy and Tourism Minister KJ George, and government officials.

The drive covered major BDA layouts, including Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout, Banashankari 6th Stage and Shivaram Karanth Layout. The authority planted saplings of only native species to improve biodiversity and strengthen the city's ecological resilience.

The BDA said the initiative forms part of the Bengaluru Urban Ecological Restoration Mission 2026 to 2030, which aims to expand the city's green cover, improve air quality, enhance biodiversity and build climate resilient neighbourhoods.

BDA Commissioner Major P Manivannan said the authority would now focus on ensuring the survival, maintenance and healthy growth of every sapling planted. "True success will be measured not only by this record, but by the thriving urban forests these saplings will become."

Where the saplings were planted

Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout	6.77 lakh
Shivaram Karanth Layout	7.12 lakh
Banashankari 6th Stage	1.05 lakh
Total:	**14.95 lakh**

BDA Chairman NA Haris presents the Guinness Book of World Records certificate to Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Sunday. Minister Krishna Byre Gowda and Adjudicator Rishi Nath are seen.

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Kannada Language Workshop: Manoj Kumar Kolla, Ho Na Neelakantegowda, Thimmaiah to attend; Organised by Department of School Education (PU); Mangala Mantapa, NMKRV PU College, Jayanagar 3rd Block; 9.30 am.

Felicitation to CM DK Shivakumar: Minister KJ George, K Balaram to attend; Organised by Federation of KPTCL Employees Unions and Associations; Tripuravasini, Gate No 2, Palace Grounds; 10 am.

CULTURAL

Musical Tribute: 'Bheema Bhakti Gaanalahari' in memory of Bhimsen Joshi; Raghavendra Bhat Sagara to perform, A Padmaraju to attend; Kadu Malleshwara Geleyara Balaga; Kadu Malleshwara Bayalu Ranga Mantapa, Malleswaram; 6.30 pm.

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST

Generally cloudy sky with light rain

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	30.5°C
Minimum	21.7°C
Rainfall (as of 8:30 am)	NIL
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm)	68%
Sunset (Jun 29)	6:49 pm
Sunrise (Jun 30)	5:56 am
Moonrise	5:39 pm
Moonset	4:15 am

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

BANGALORE TURF CLUB LTD.
Post Box No. 5038, Race Course Road, Bangalore-560001
EPABX : 22262391/2/3 Extn: 225, 480,
Email: purchase@btcraces.com | CIN: U99999KA1962PLC001449

Invites Quotations for Supply of urine sample collection kits

Sealed quotations are invited from reputed manufacturers, authorized distributors and suppliers for the Supply of equine Urine Sample Collection Kits as per the specifications advertised by Bangalore Turf Club Limited web site : **www.bangaloreraces.com**

The quotation should be submitted in a sealed cover "Equine Urine Sample Collection Kits" on or before 08th July 2026.

Bangalore Turf Club Limited reserves the right to accept or reject any quotation without assigning any reason thereof.

Date : 29-06-2026
Bengaluru

Sd/-
Secretary

Need a hand? Write to us

Letters of grievances are pouring in and we are doing our best to accommodate as many as possible. Readers may write in to highlight civic problems affecting their locality and we will help address them in an interactive and effective manner. Grievances and issues related to public utility agencies such as Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) and Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (Bescom) would be highlighted in the weekly column. The writeups, which could be accompanied by photographs highlighting the problems, will be published on Mondays. Mail your grievances to: peoplesproblems @ deccanherald.co.in

Garbage not collected for more than three days

It has been more than three days since the garbage was collected from our homes and the streets of 2nd Main Road, 3rd Block, HRBR Layout.

We are stuck at every stage with utter confusion, not knowing whom to contact.

Earlier, it was easier when the councillor represented the constituency and local issues were routed through them.

Now, the officers keep changing, making it difficult for residents to know whom to approach.

Kindly arrange for immediate garbage collection.

Menaka Ram
HRBR Layout

Water pipeline damaged near ITPL

I am a resident of Whitefield and regularly travel via Aster Hospital, Whitefield, near ITPL.

I have observed Cauvery water leaking due to damage to the pipeline at three locations in front of the hospital.

When I contacted the BBMP helpline (1533), I was asked to contact the BWSSB helpline (1916).

However, when I dialled the number, I was kept on hold for more than 20 minutes before the call was disconnected.

N Sudhan

Kannada as third language: Private schools oppose NCERT note

Cite state law under which it's mandatory first or second language

BENGALURU, DHNS

The private schools' association has raised objections to the recent decision of the National Council for Education Research Training (NCERT) to implement Kannada as R3 subject (third language) in Karnataka.

In a representation to the NCERT chairman, the Associated Management of Primary and Secondary Schools in Karnataka has cited the Kannada Language Learning Act, 2015, under which teaching Kannada as first or second language is mandatory in the state.

Urging NCERT to withdraw the recent circular by Central Board for Secondary Education to affiliated schools on mandatory third language in Karnataka, the association said that it had resulted in serious legal ambiguity, administrative confusions and practical difficulties.

"We have submitted the representation in the interest of lakhs of students, parents, teachers and educational institutions," it said.

Act and rules

In the representation, the association mentioned the Act and rules framed under it, in 2017.

"The rules clearly provide that every school in Karnataka, including those under CBSE, ICSE and State Board, shall introduce Kannada as either first language or second language in a phased manner," the Association said.

The rules provide for a separate mechanism for students who migrate from other states, it said.

D Shashi Kumar, general secretary of the association, said, "Technically it is impossible to implement the three language policy and R3 subjects introduced at CBSE schools, as majority of the schools have implemented Kannada as first or second language, as per the Act."

Man dies by suicide after mother asks him to quit drinking

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 29-year-old man allegedly died by suicide after his mother asked him to quit drinking alcohol.

The deceased has been identified as Siddaraju from Yadgir. He stayed with his mother in CK Palya. She worked as a helper in a private school, while Siddaraju was jobless.

On Saturday night, Siddaraju asked his mother for money, as he usually did. She refused and told him to quit the habit. He left the house, and the following morning, he was run over by a moving garbage truck.

Hulimavu police registered a case after verifying the death through CCTV feed. The footage showed Siddarju lying down headfirst in the path of truck's rear wheel as it slowly moved, crushing him to death.

A search is on for the truck driver who was reportedly unaware of Siddaraju's suicide attempt.

2 killed after building roof collapses on them

DEVADURGA (RAICHUR DISTRICT), DHNS: Two persons were killed on the spot and four sustained injuries after the roof of a building caved in on them near new bus stand in Devadurga on Sunday.

The deceased have been identified as Nagaraja Chidanandappa (20) and Ravikumar Yallappa (19). The police, who visited the spot, said that the building is about 50 year old, and "unscientifically constructed" stairs to the first floor caused the tragedy. Out of the four injured, three are being treated at the taluk hospital, while another one with grievous injuries has been shifted to Raichur Institute of Medical Sciences.

Devadurga police have registered a case.

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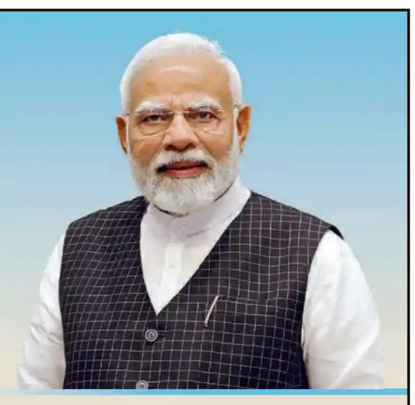

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- Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

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by
V. Somanna
Union Minister of State for Railways and Jal Shakti

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Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Gujarat

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Farmers hug trees as part of 'Appiko' protest against the Bidadi township project at Byramangala in Bengaluru South district on Sunday. PHOTO BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Farmers launch 'Appiko' protest against Bidadi township project

BENGALURU, DHNS

Intensifying their opposition to the proposed Bidadi Township project, hundreds of farmers on Sunday launched an 'Appiko' (tree-hugging) movement, declaring that they would neither part with their agricultural land nor allow the felling of trees for the ambitious development plan.

The protest, held near Byramangala in Bengaluru South district, saw farmers hugging trees and raising slogans in defence of their land and the environment. The demonstrators alleged that nearly 1.5 million trees could be affected if the project goes ahead and accused the government of pursuing contradictory environmental policies.

The agitation marks a new phase in a movement that has been continuing for nearly one-and-a-half years against the proposed land acquisition. While earlier protests failed to draw widespread attention, the issue has regained political prominence following renewed discussions on the township proposal.

Farmers marched from Byramangala Junction to the area earmarked for the project, where they embraced trees as a symbolic act of resistance. Protesters carried placards with the slogan, "Nature is ours, and so is our future," stressing the need to protect the region's green cover.

Speaking during the protest, farmers criticised the government for celebrating large-scale tree plantation drives while allegedly preparing to cut down lakhs of trees in the name of development.

A protester said that if authorities attempted to fell the trees, villagers would physically shield them. "If they want to cut these trees, they will have to cross us first. We have nurtured these trees for years, and we will not allow them to be destroyed," he said.

Farmers also reiterated their opposition to land acquisition, maintaining that their agricultural land was their livelihood and would not be surrendered under any circumstances.

With the launch of the Appiko movement, protesting farmers have sought to shift the focus from land acquisition alone to the larger issue of environmental conservation, insisting that both their livelihoods and the region's ecological balance are at stake.

B'luru tops country in straight-road crashes, over-speeding

2nd in total accidents among cities with million-plus people

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Bengaluru retained its dubious distinction in road safety, witnessing the highest number of road accidents on straight roads and due to over-speeding among India's million-plus cities in 2024, according to the ministry of road transport and highways.

The city reported a staggering 4,161 accidents on straight roads, resulting in 766 deaths and 3,463 injuries. Curved road accidents stood at 415, claiming 87 lives. Potholes caused just two accidents, but killed two people. Roads under construction accounted for 21 crashes, six deaths and 30 injuries, says the 'Road Accidents in India 2024' report.

Bengaluru also led the country in over-speeding related incidents with 4,290 accidents, which killed 776 people and injured 3,609. Jabalpur was a distant second in over-speeding category with 3,878 accidents.

The IT city recorded a total of 4,769 road accidents in 2024, resulting in 894 deaths and 4,022 injuries.

This placed it second among million-plus cities in total road accidents, behind Delhi, which reported 5,657 accidents and a much higher 1,551 fatalities. Jabalpur stood third with 3,928 accidents and 589 deaths.

The city reported a staggering 4,161 accidents on straight roads, resulting in 766 deaths and 3,463 injuries. DH FILE PHOTO

The top 10 million-plus cities —Delhi, Bengaluru, Jabalpur, Hyderabad, Chennai, Indore, Malappuram, Kochi, Jaipur and Bhopal — together accounted for 46.34% of all road accidents in the country.

The figures show a marginal improvement from 2023, when Bengaluru recorded 4,974 accidents and 915 deaths — a reduction of 205 accidents or about 4.1%.

However, the long-term trend remains concerning. Accidents have risen sharply from 3,233 in 2020 to 4,769 in 2024.

Drunken driving contributed to 129 accidents, killing 45 people and injuring 83.

A vast majority of crashes — 4,213 accidents and 755 deaths — occurred in clear and sunny conditions. Rainy weather accounted for 144 accidents and 32 deaths, while foggy and misty conditions led to 375 crashes, 97 fatalities and 355 injuries.

Two-wheelers were involved in the highest number of incidents, with 2,175 accidents resulting in 467 deaths and 2,091 injuries. Pedestrian accidents numbered 216, but resulted in a disproportionately high 241 deaths and 1,039 injuries. Bicycle-related crashes stood at 47, with 13 deaths and 36 injuries.

Across India, police departments reported a total of 4,87,707 road accidents in 2024, claiming 1,77,175 lives and injuring 4,71,441 persons.

Protest against 'unconstitutional' SIR in state tomorrow

BENGALURU, DHNS: The federation of anti-SIR secular parties and progressive organisations on Sunday announced that they would hold a state-level protest sporting black dress or black stripes on Tuesday against the 'unconstitutional, unscientific, error-ridden' SIR exercise.

In a press note, office-bearers of the federation, such as J M Veerasangaiah and K L Ashok, expressed disappointment that their two protests on May 30 and June 20, in favour of four demands to 'democratise' SIR, had received no response from the Election Commission.

"Against this backdrop, we will register our protest on June 30 by sporting black dresses, holding placards against SIR at district and taluk centres in front of houses. Under 'our village our responsibility' and 'our area our responsibility,' we will form 'vote protecting committees' at the gram panchayat and ward levels."

The federation insisted that the Election Commission should not use software-flagged errors like 'logical discrepancy' in Karnataka, which is not mentioned in the election manual.

"The draft voters' list should be open to public scrutiny at the gram panchayat and ward meetings. At least six months should be provided to submit applications. The draft voters' list should be provided in a readable format," the federation said.

Polio immunisation drive begins from CM's house

BENGALURU, DHNS

Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said on Sunday that all children below the age of five should be vaccinated against polio.

"The government has launched the Pulse Polio vaccination drive, and parents in all parts of the state should get children under five (years) vaccinated. A healthy state and nation can be built from a healthy family," he said after launching the pulse polio vaccination programme at his Sadashivnagar residence.

"Health Minister U T Khader is very smart. My granddaughter is one month old, so he chose my house. Khader decided to launch this programme at my home itself, so that this campaign would begin from the chief minister's house."

Explaining that programmes have been designed at every stage to build a healthy Karnataka, the chief minister explained that people from elsewhere were coming to Karnataka for its healthcare.

"Our government has decided to administer the polio vaccine to 60,84,911 children. In 1972, Indira Gandhi started a polio vaccination programme to ensure the country's children would stay healthy. During Rajiv Gandhi's time, it was launched as a campaign. During Manmohan Singh's time, India became a polio-free country," he said.

Chief Minister D K Shivakumar administers polio drops to a baby during the launch of the vaccination drive in Bengaluru on Sunday. Health Minister U T Khader is also seen. PTI PHOTO

60.36 lakh children receive polio drops in state

As many as 60.36 lakh children under the age of five received polio drops across Karnataka during the Pulse Polio immunisation drive on Sunday.

That was about 93% of the 64.84 lakh children the health department aims to vaccinate this year. Children who missed the drive will be covered through door-to-door vaccination until July 1.

Apart from health centres, vaccination booths were set up at railway, bus and metro stations, and other public places. Around 1.14 lakh personnel were deployed for the campaign.

The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) area recorded the highest number of children vaccinated, with 11.06 lakh receiving polio drops.

That was 96.4% of the target of 11.47 lakh.

Vaccination was 95.45% in the Bengaluru Central City Corporation, 99.48% in the East, 94.34% in the West, 98.22% in the North and 95.13% in the South.

The rest of Bengaluru Urban topped the district-wise performance, achieving nearly 100% of its target by vaccinating 2.02 lakh children against a target of 2.03 lakh.

The districts of Shivamogga, Raichur, Kolar, Kalaburagi, Dharwad, Chikkaballapur, Ballari and Haveri achieved 95% or higher of their respective targets.

Kodagu recorded the lowest performance, vaccinating 31,000 children against a target of 38,000, achieving 82% of its goal. Gadag was the second-lowest at 83%.

Eight held for ruckus during Kempegowda Jayanti fete

CHIKKABALLAPUR, DHNS: Eight individuals, including JD(S) social media co-ordinator for Chikkaballapur district Akhil Reddy, have been arrested in connection with the ruckus that marred the Kempegowda Jayanti celebrations in the district on Saturday, wherein a slipper was hurled at MLA Pradeep Eshwar.

Tension prevailed in Chikkaballapur a day after the incident, with police stepping up security at various spots across the town on Saturday.

A suo motu case has been registered in connection with the incident at the Chikkaballapur town police station.

The complaint makes mention of the indecorous language that some of the accused – Reddy, Mohan Raj, Mahendra and Prakash – employed while addressing Eshwar.

The four of them even threatened Eshwar's life, besides obstructing cops, who intervened to defuse the situation, from performing their duty. More people could be arrested in connection with the incident in the days to come.

Gutka, pan masala to be banned if intoxicants found in them: CM

BENGALURU, DHNS

In a major announcement, Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said on Sunday that there would be a ban on gutka and pan masala in Karnataka if they contained banned intoxicants.

"It has come to my attention that intoxicating substances are being mixed into pan masala, gutka, areca nut and other such products before being sold, engineered to give a drug-like 'high'. If this is indeed true and is not stopped immediately, the sale of all types of pan masala, gutka and chewing tobacco products will be banned in Karnataka," the chief minister said.

He was speaking during the 31st Foundation Day of Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences (RGUHS) celebration and 'Drug-Free India Conclave'.

Shivakumar noted that the state established a dedicated anti-narcotic task force (ANTF) in 2025 to hunt down trafficking networks, but added that such efforts cannot succeed if national borders remain compromised.

Drawing a 'tap-and-bucket' analogy to emphasise his point, he said: "The drug menace in the country is like a tap and a bucket. As long as the tap at the border stays open, no matter what you do locally, the bucket fills up repeatedly."

Articulating that the aim was to build a "drug-free" Karnataka, the CM said everyone should unite to ensure the younger generation does not fall into the trap of addiction.

Urging the youth to handle the crisis with an iron fist, Shivakumar called upon students to master the power of the "first refusal" when facing peer pressure, advising them to decide their answer before the moment arrives.

"Drugs take you to hell, disguised as heaven. Be careful of momentary joy," he said.

Reminding them of the immense family sacrifices behind every hard-won medical seat, the chief minister concluded with an appeal for campus vigilance: "Be high on life, not on drugs."

60-year-old held for alleged links to gold smuggling syndicate

Gold, from Page 1

He was detained, frisked, and physically searched. DRI investigators found gold hidden inside the undergarments, likely in paste or compound form.

"The gold was concealed ingeniously within the layers of five specially-prepared undergarments," DRI sources said.

The officials extracted 1.811 kg of foreign-origin gold, valued at Rs 2.6 crore, from the undergarments and formally arrested him under the Customs Act, 1962.

The following morning, a judge remanded him in DRI's custody for two days. Senior standing counsel and Special Public Prosecutor (SPP) Madhu N Rao represented the DRI.

In follow-up searches at Reddy's residential properties in Bengaluru and Chennai, DRI authorities recovered 1.424 kg of gold jewellery worth Rs 1.47 crore, 45 kg of silver valued at Rs 97 lakh, Rs 30.73 lakh in Indian currency, and Rs 1 lakh in foreign currency.

"He is suspected to be part of a gold-smuggling syndicate and not just a courier," the sources said.

On June 27, a Bengaluru court remanded Reddy in judicial custody for 14 days, the sources added.

Registered sale deeds can't be disregarded on minor...

Property, from Page 1

The court emphasised that unlike wills or gift deeds, attestation is not a statutory requirement for the validity of a sale deed. Minor variations in the details of an attesting witness cannot, by themselves, cast doubt on a registered sale deed that carries a strong presumption of genuineness under law.

The court made the observations in its June 23, 2026, judgment, while allowing an appeal by the legal representatives of Sharafat Ali and others, who had purchased agricultural land measuring 15 bigha, 11 biswa in Narsipur Kalan village, Haridwar district, Uttarakhand (then Uttar Pradesh), through a registered sale deed executed on June 4, 1957.

The buyers were minors at the time, and possession was handed over to them.

The dispute, which dragged on for decades through mutation proceedings, consolidation authorities under the UP Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, and the high court, saw the appellants' claim repeatedly rejected primarily on the ground of alleged inconsistencies in the description of an attesting witness and purported violation of land ceiling provisions.

Setting aside the orders of the consolidation authorities and the high court, the Supreme Court termed their approach a "manifest error". The bench observed that the discrepancies noted after nearly four decades (when the attesting witness was examined in 1995) were inconsequential.

"Such minor variations in the description of residence or village particulars (of a n attesting witnesses) could hardly be treated as material contradictions striking at the root of the transaction itself," the court said, adding that the two villages mentioned were in close proximity

The court underscored that a registered document carries a statutory presumption of valid execution and genuineness, which can be rebutted only by strong evidence.

Even a certified copy of the sale deed, it noted, is presumed genuine under Section 79 of the Indian Evidence Act. Importantly, the bench clarified that the sale deed could not be treated as void under Section 154 of the UP Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act.

The provision does not automatically invalidate the transfer; it only exposes the buyer to possible ejectment through a suit by the Gaon Sabha, which was never filed in this case, it said.

The top court further held that consolidation authorities cannot ignore a registered sale deed — even if claimed to be voidable — unless it is cancelled by a competent civil court.

Noting that the respondents never alleged forgery, coercion or fraud in the execution of the deed, and that the appellants had been asserting possession for decades without effective rebuttal, the bench ruled that the findings of the authorities and the high court were unsustainable. The court directed that the names of the appellants would be entered in the revenue records as bhumidars, bringing an end to the protracted litigation.

Ram temple case: Police raid homes of 8 accused

Ram temple, from Page 1

Those arrested were booked under Sections 306 (theft by clerk or servant), 316 (criminal breach of trust), 317 (receiving stolen property dishonestly) and 61 (criminal conspiracy) of the Bhartiya Nyaya Samhita (BNS).

Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust general secretary Champat Rai and trust member Anil Mishra had earlier resigned in the wake of the controversy. The Opposition continued to target the Uttar Pradesh government, questioning the non-inclusion of key trust functionaries and the arrest of only what they termed "small fish".

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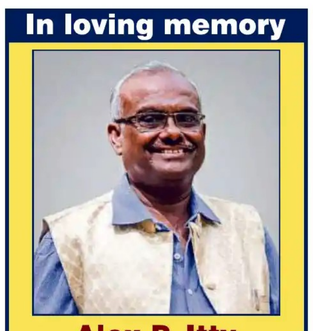

Alex P. Itty
With profound sadness, we inform you of the passing away of Alex P. Itty (Jan 26, 1951- Jun 27, 2026).
His love and warmth will remain in our hearts forever.
Funeral at Mar Thoma Syrian Church, Primrose Road on June 30, 11 AM.

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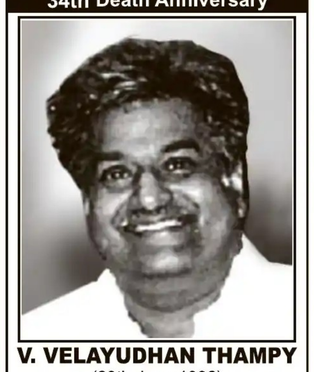
34th Death Anniversary



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India, Seychelles to expand...

Seychelles, Page?

"As maritime neighbours, security in the Indian Ocean region remains central to our relationship," Herminie said after meeting Modi.

Seychelles occupies a strategic position astride key sea lanes linking the Persian Gulf and East Africa with Asia. Its proximity to major maritime routes that carry much of the world's energy supplies and trade has placed the archipelago at the centre of the strategic rivalry between India and China in the Indian Ocean.

New Delhi marked the prime minister's visit to Victoria by pledging to gift a fast patrol vessel, PS Lespwar, to Seychelles and handing over 10 utility vehicles and five sets of Laser Radial class boats to the defence forces of the island nation.

The Indian Navy sent its stealth frigate INS Tarkash and large survey vessel INS Ikshak to Port Victoria to join the celebration on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Independence of Seychelles. The Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy also sent its destroyer Tangshan to Port Victoria on the occasion.

India on Sunday agreed to provide a Rs 1,250 crore umbrella Line of Credit to Seychelles. The two governments inked a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

Seychelles joined the Coalition for Disaster Resilience Infrastructure led by India on Sunday. The two sides have also signed an extradition treaty.

"India will remain your trusted partner. We will celebrate your achievements. We will support your aspirations. And we will stand beside you as friends," Modi said in his speech in the National Assembly of Seychelles, underscoring the island nation's importance in his government's MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) vision.

Foolproof mechanism insulates govt-run temples from frauds

Regular audits, oversight panels keep finances secure

PAVAN KUMAR H
HUBBALLI, DHNS

The Hindu religious institutions and charitable endowments department, which looks after the day-to-day activities and development of 34,563 temples in the state, has put in a place a mechanism to ensure that donations and offerings at these places of worship are utilized for the purpose they are meant for.

Karnataka has 201 grade-A temples, whose annual income is above Rs 25 lakh; 139 grade-B temples with annual income above Rs 5 lakh and below Rs 25 lakh and 34,223 grade-C temples.

Sources in the department told *DH* that, on average, temples under the control of the government generate approximately Rs 650 crore to Rs 700 crore annually.

Dinesh P, senior officer at the endowment department, says every temple has its own accounts and funds generated by these temples are utilized in that temple itself.

"The devotees get acknowledgment of their offerings, be it silver, gold or any other item. The ornaments are used on specific dates as requested by the devotees or on special occasions. Offerings made in cash are credited to the main account of the temple and used for development and maintenance purposes," he said.

In big temples like Kukke Subrahmanya, Mookambika temple, Kolluru and other temples where 'anna prasada' is provided, there are separate accounts for devotees to make offerings.

FAITH & FUNDS

Grade-A - 201 (annual income above Rs 25L/yr)

Grade-B - 139 (above Rs 5L, below Rs 25L)

Grade-C - 34,223
Total income of state-run temples - Rs 650 cr - Rs 700 cr per annum

Based on the collection of funds, the respective temple development committee/ board prepares an annual plan and expenditure is done accordingly.

While the commissioner of endowment department prepares and approves annual plans for grade-A temples, the deputy commissioner of the respective district approves expenditure plans prepared by the respective committee for grade B and C temples.

The committees and boards comprise of prominent personalities, appointees of the government and government officials.

Action on misappropriation

Dinesh says accounts of all temples are regularly audited and action is initiated against officials concerned if any misappropriation of funds is found.

He claims that in the recent past, none of the temples under government control reported any financial wrongdoing.

Amphetamine-Type Stimulants (ATS)
Karnataka: 49 kg
Across India: 3,269 kg

Cocaine
Karnataka: 14.52kg
Across India: 226 kg

Codeine-Based Cough Syrups
Karnataka: 0.5 litre, 419 bottles
Across India: 1,310 litre 27,45,649 bottles

Ganja
Karnataka: 7,005 kg
Across India: 6,28,190 kg

Hashish
Karnataka: 6.22 kg
Across India: 5,112 kg

Hashish Oil
Karnataka: 4.29 kg
Across India: 295 kg

Heroin
Karnataka: 0.72 kg
Across India: 3,567 kg

Khat Leaves
Karnataka: 162.52 kg
Across India: 163 kg

LSD
Karnataka: 808 Blot 0.04 kg
Across India: 4983 Blot 4,983 kg

MDMA
Karnataka: 114.70 kg
Across India: 216 kg

Opium
Karnataka: 3 kg
Across India: 8,094 kg

TOTAL CASES
Karnataka: 1,863
Across India: 1,48,063

TOTAL ARRESTS
Karnataka: 2,979
Across India: 1,83,675

*Action by Drug Law Enforcement Agencies at state and central level

Staff crunch hinders NCB...

NCB, From Page 1

The executive wing has a vacancy of 27.41% — 993 of 1,368 have been filled, leaving 375 vacant. The sanctioned posts for deputy/zonal directors are 28, but now there are only 13. Nearly 36% posts of inspectors — 93 of 259 — are vacant, while that of sub-inspectors, it is 23% — 74 of 319. Among surveillance assistants, the vacancy is 56% or 61 of 108 posts.

"The induction included officers at supervisory levels as well as field-level personnel. These officers bring diverse field experience and specialised knowledge, thereby strengthening operations," the report said.

Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd.

Notice Inviting Tender

IRCTC Invites Open E tender for Golden Chariot Luxury Tourist Train as under:

Tender No. 2026/IRCTC/ Interior Repair and Restoration Works /GC/02: For Interior Repair and Restoration Works in Golden Chariot Train for Season 2026-27.

Last date of submission of the tender is **15.07.2026 at 15:00 Hrs.**

For more details refer to IRCTC website www.irctc.com and www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC

Group General Manager/Tourism,
IRCTC Ltd., 3rd Floor, Tower-D,
World Trade Centre, Nauroji Nagar,
New Delhi -110029, Email: mohsin6675@irctc.com

2.2-km Hebbal short-tunnel road...

Short tunnel, From Page 1

The CM also listed projects such as the 10-lane Major Arterial Road (MAR) between Mysuru and Magadi roads, the proposed Bengaluru Business Corridor project and the 17-km tunnel road between Hebbal and Silk Board Junction as some of the government's solutions to address Bengaluru's traffic congestion.

Defending the tolled tunnel road proposal, which has attracted criticism, the chief minister said motorists who choose to pay for faster travel would do so voluntarily.

Independent mobility expert Satya Arikutharam said both the short tunnel and the flyover were illegal as they do not have the statutory approval as per Section 19 of the Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority.

Iran warns ships not to bypass...

Iran, From Page 1

Iran has continued to insist on controlling passage through the vital strait, through which a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas travel in normal times, something it did not have before the war.

At the moment, Iran insists ships transiting the strait pass through a corridor close to its own shores, though this week dozens of vessels have travelled along the opposite side of the waterway, hugging the Omani coast.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said Sunday they were taking measures to control traffic in the strait and that vessels in violation of those measures would be dealt with more firmly than before.

Mohammad Mokhber, adviser to Iran's supreme leader, wrote on X that as long as Iran managed the strait, Washington's "hegemonic dreams in the region will not be realised".

Heavy rains lash Uttara Kannada, parts of Kalyana Karnataka

BENGALURU, DHNS

The coastal half of Uttara Kannada and several parts of Kalyana Karnataka witnessed heavy showers after a prolonged break, on Sunday.

Skies opened up on Saturday evening in coastal towns of Uttara Kannada district and it continued to pour intermittently on Sunday. Karwar, Bhatkal and Honnavar have been receiving sharp showers since Saturday evening. Overnight showers left roads and residential areas flooded.

Salkod in Honnavar taluk recorded 124 mm, highest in state in the last 24 hours (ending 8.30 am on Sunday). Hosakuli in the taluk registered 110 mm.

Several parts of Kalyana Karnataka, including Kalaburagi district, experienced heavy rain for over an hour on Sunday afternoon.

The region saw the transitioning of a sweltering morning into an overcast afternoon. In the evening, skies opened up and it poured for over an hour in Kalaburagi city, Afzalpur, Jewargi, Chincholi, Bidar, Basavakalyan, Humnabad and Bhalki. The rains brought cheers to farmers.

Children play football, the flavour of the season, braving rain at Maladevi Grounds in Karwar. This and other coastal towns of Uttara Kannada district experienced heavy showers since Saturday evening. DH PHOTO/GANAPATI HEGDE

KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(CIN: U40109KA1999SGC025521)
No: CEE/Tr(Op)Z/HSN/SEE(O)/AEE-3/F-TA18(B)/2026-27/3491-94 Date: 24.06.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION (Through KPPP mode only)

KPTCL invites bids through e-Procurement mode for the following works.
Tender No.: KPTCL/2026-27/EL/WORK_INDENT3920.
Combined package of 1) WORK A: Balance portion of Providing additional 1x8MVA, 66/11kV Transformer at 220/66/11kV Muguluvalli sub-station in Chikkamagaluru Taluk & District. **Work Code-CE1047**
2) WORK B: Providing SAS Panel for 11kV bus coupler & SAS integration for 11kV switchgear and other left out works of additional 8MVA, 66/11kV Transformer-2 at 220/66/11kV Muguluvalli Receiving station in Chikkamagaluru Taluk & District.
The detailed notification regarding subject enquiry in the e-Tendering process can be obtained by logging on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** on hyperlink "tenders" on or after **29.06.2026 at 11:00 Hrs.** Other details can be obtained from the office of the undersigned.

Sd/- Chief Engineer, (Elec.),
Transmission (Operations) Zone, KPTCL, 3rd Floor,
Prasarana Bhavana, Santhepete, B.M. Road, Hassan.

INDIAN NAVY
COMBAT READY COHESIVE AATMANIRBHAR

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EMPLOYMENT NEWS DATED 27 JUNE 2026

Branch / Cadre	Vacancies	vacancies
Executive Branch {GS(X)}/Hydro Cadre}	90 (including 10 Hydro)	Men and Women {maximum of 10 vacancies in GS (X) and 02 vacancies in Hydro for women}
Pilot	25	Men and Women (maximum of 03 vacancies for women)
Naval Air Operation Officer (Observers)	18	Men and Women (maximum of 03 vacancies for women)
Air Traffic Controller	15	Men and Women
Logistics	10	Men and Women (maximum of 02 vacancies for women)
Naval Armament Inspectorate Cadre (NAIC)	14	Men and Women
Education	13	Men and Women
Engineering Branch {General Service (GS)}	24	Men and Women (maximum of 04 vacancies for women)
Submarine Tech Engineering	08	Only for Men
Electrical Branch {General Service (GS)}	32	Men and Women (maximum of 05 vacancies for women)
Submarine Tech Electrical	08	Only for Men
Naval Constructor	18	Men and Women

CBC 10701/13/0015/2627

For eligibility criteria and details visit www.joinindiannavy.gov.in

Safeguarding Seas for a Viksit Samriddha Bharat

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Now the spotlight is on citizenship

The statement made by an official of the Ministry of External Affairs that a passport is only a travel document and not conclusive proof of Indian citizenship has raised questions and created confusion. Strictly speaking, the statement is not news. It does not lay down any new policy. Passports are issued under the Passports Act, and citizenship is governed by the Citizenship Act,1955. Although passports are generally issued after confirming citizenship, in special cases, they can be issued to non-citizens. The courts have also affirmed that it is a travel document. The Constitution defines citizenship, but does not mention a document that conclusively establishes it. Even procedures for obtaining voter IDs or PAN cards do not demand proof of citizenship.

The statement about the passport may, therefore, not be about it, but about citizenship. It might be meant to create uncertainties about citizenship, and to show that citizenship needs to be proved afresh. By law, citizenship may be acquired through birth, descent, registration, naturalisation or incorporation of territory. The citizenship of all those who are now citizens, or deem themselves to be citizens, may be seen as valid only on any of those grounds. The MEA statement on the passport's inadequacy suggests that citizenship must be established in the way the government wants it to be proved.

The reference to passports has caused concern that it might lead to a citizenship survey, with all its consequences

The situation could be like the demand made by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to the voters that they prove their status as voters. Millions of names have been removed from the voters' rolls, and lakhs of people are waiting for a decision on their voting status. The ECI asked for a clutch of documents to prove that a person is a voter. Many could not provide them because it was practically not possible for them to procure them. The names of many who produced the documents were also removed. It could be much worse in the case of citizenship. The only document that could prove citizenship is the birth certificate, that too with conditions relating to the year of birth or parentage attached to it. Many people do not have it and can't get it even if they try because the original records may not exist. So, the situation in India will be much worse than the SIR of the electoral rolls if there is a special intensive revision of citizenship. There has been talk about a National Register of Citizens (NRC) and a Citizenship (Amendment) Bill. The reference to passports has caused concern that it might lead to a citizenship survey, with all its consequences.

Glitches catch BMRCL flat-footed yet again

Before the dust had settled on one disruption, Bengaluru's Namma Metro Purple Line suffered another. Two major interruptions in three days have again exposed the fragility of the city's most vital transport corridor — not merely because failures occurred, but because no effective plan existed to manage their consequences. The first, an electrical fault, halted services near Cubbon Park station during the evening rush hour, stranding thousands as operations were curtailed across the central section. Barely two days later, another train bound for Challaghatta was immobilised at the same station when a passenger's metal chain jammed a door. Though not a system failure, safety protocols required evacuation, delaying subsequent services.

Bengaluru (South) MP Tejasvi Surya has claimed that these are part of nearly 21 disruptions since 2024, with the Purple Line accounting for most of them. Given this, his demand for an independent safety audit deserves consideration. The Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) is a joint venture of the Union and Karnataka governments, making this a shared responsibility. No metro system in the world is immune to technical glitches. What distinguishes a well-run network is not the absence of failures but the efficiency with which it responds. Here, the BMRCL fell short. Passengers received little useful information. Poor mobile connectivity inside underground stations left many confused about alternatives, while outside, auto-rickshaw drivers demanded exorbitant fares as commuters scrambled for transport.

What distinguishes a well-run network is not the absence of failures but the efficiency with which it responds

This is where contingency planning becomes indispensable. The government should have immediately deployed BMTC buses to shuttle passengers. During such exigencies, the response must extend beyond buses to include temporarily capping surge pricing on ride-hailing apps and strictly enforcing auto-rickshaw fares to prevent the exploitation of stranded citizens. Station staff must have clearly rehearsed standard operating procedures to guide commuters, make frequent public announcements and co-ordinate with traffic police and civic agencies — something that was missing in the recent instance. Such protocols should be tested through periodic mock drills, rather than improvised during emergencies. Mumbai faced similar criticism after a recent glitch, highlighting that as India's metro systems expand, emergency preparedness must match engineering advancement. For Bengaluru, the repeated disruptions are a reminder that the Purple Line's central corridor is operating at or near its structural capacity. Routine maintenance must be complemented by technical audits and predictive monitoring to identify vulnerabilities before they escalate. In short, Namma Metro must become proactive rather than reactive. A world-class metro is judged not by whether it breaks down, but by how confidently it carries its passengers through the unexpected.

BREAK THE CYCLE

Squeezing the Indian working class

With real wages flatlining across rural and urban livelihoods, a worrying pivot towards debt-fuelled consumption has unfolded

DEEPANSHU MOHAN AND SRISONIYA SUBRAMONIAM

A close observation of India's (macro) economic indicators tells a projected story of robust fiscal discipline and growth. However, looking at the average household budget will portray a far more fragile reality.

Over the last 12 years, the vital link between national wealth creation and individual purchasing power has broken.

As real wages flatline across rural and urban livelihoods, a silent pivot towards debt-fuelled consumption has occurred. Families are now increasingly substituting missing income with credit card debt, personal loans, and gold loans to keep pace with the cost of living.

This brings to light the wage-debt squeeze that is fragmenting the domestic market and forcing the working class to walk on a precarious financial tightrope.

The escalating financial strain on the Indian working class since 2014 cannot be dismissed merely as a temporary external price shock; it is rather a realignment in how national wealth is generated and distributed.

While economic expansion and corporate equity indices have scaled up, the domestic transmission mechanism has broken down. When such a structural wage gap is sustained over a period of 12 years, it inevitably shifts the macroeconomy.

This income deficit directly explains the fall in India's net household financial savings to a historically low of 5.2% of GNDI in FY2023, from its long-standing average of 7-8%. Household financial liabilities, on the other hand, have nearly doubled from 3% of GDP in FY2014 to 5.7% by FY2023, resulting in a combined household debt breaching 40% of GDP by end of 2023.

Long-term economic data extensively documents the 'K-shaped divergence', which verifies that India's recent economic recovery has been driven by corporate profits rather than proportional wage growth.

Across organised sectors, non-managerial corporate compensations as a share of total company expenditure have seen a gradual decline. Additionally, compounded wage growth in heavy infrastructure and manufacturing has languished below the real rate of inflation in the last five years. This is essentially because the corporate growth model effectively finances its global profit margins by depleting the purchasing power of its own domestic workforce.

This squeeze is not an isolated urban phenomenon.

While the State has regularly instituted increases in MSPs to a benchmark of 1.5 times the cost of production, these gains are heavily skewed. The financial benefits are disproportionately captured by asset-owning landholders, who ignore the landless casual labourers who rely on these daily cash wages.

The real wages for casual labourers have languished at an annualised growth rate of under 1.5% across the 12-year horizon. This wage suppression

has been compounded due a deficit of stable employment opportunities within formal urban channels.

The economy witnessed a massive reverse migration wave returning millions of workers back to agriculture since 2018-2019. This structural labour glut has diluted the bargaining environment, diminishing the strength of organised labour to negotiate fair baseline compensation.

The commercialisation of survival

When an economy systematically substitutes wage growth with credit access, the fundamental nature of consumer debt mutates. The critical macroeconomic concern for India is not merely the aggregate of household debt, but rather its survivalist composition.

The internal architecture of domestic borrowing has pivoted away from asset-backed leverage, such as housing mortgages, to short-term unsecured liabilities.

The RBI's Financial Stability Reports note that unsecured personal loans and consumer retail credit have registered compounding annualised growth rates of 22-25% in recent years.

Outstanding credit card debt and loans against gold jewellery, which are traditionally borrowers' last resort, have surged; gold loans alone have reached Rs 3.38 lakh-crore, registering a massive 128.5% year-on-year growth. This localised credit explosion is concentrated specifically within the lower-income brackets facing the sharpest real-wage stagnation.

TransUnion CIBIL report reveals that small-ticket loans under Rs 50,000 have seen the most explosive growth, driven by digital lending apps and micro-finance institutions targeting distress borrowers.

By utilising short-term, but expensive debt, to fund immediate survival, the working class effectively borrows from its future financial security to keep current domestic consumption afloat. Debt-led consumption provides a temporary illusion of demand stability, but it does so by compromising long-term solvency of the Indian household.

The stabilisation of macro-indicators has occurred at the cost of financial survival of work-class households.

Unsecured retail debt growth cannot permanently replace real income expansion, nor can small-ticket micro-loans act as a lasting surrogate for a stable social safety net.

When household financial liabilities double as real agricultural wages grow at less than 1% per annum, it means that the economy is running on borrowed time.

To transition from a fragmented, highly unequal K-shaped trajectory to an inclusive and sustainable growth model, India's policy should pivot away from pure supply-side incentives.

While measures like corporate tax cuts and manufacturing incentives have boosted industrial capacity, they have failed to trigger a proportional wage-multiplier effect for the workforce. The government must rationalise GST slabs on non-discretionary consumer goods and essential services to immediate lower bands.

The fiscal framework must additionally rely more on progressive direct taxation rather than burdening the working class. Revitalisation of the labour-intensive MSME ecosystem can further this initiative so that informal workers can be transitioned through formal contracts, thereby raising the national wage floor.

Finally, there needs to be a robust scaling up of public budgetary allocations for areas within healthcare and education infrastructure. When the Union government absorbs the financial risk of health and education experienced differentially by states at the moment, it immediately frees up a higher proportion of household disposable income for discretionary consumption, breaking the cycle of survivalist borrowing.

(Deepanshu is Dean and Professor of Economics, O P Jindal Global University; Srisoniya studies law and is a Research Analyst with the Centre for New Economics Studies)

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

A ticket to change

I had long avoided Chennai's buses. One ride was enough to change my mind

V VISWANATHAN

After a very long time, I recently travelled by town buses in Chennai. Normally, I rely on my own vehicles or ride-hailing apps, along with the Chennai Metro and suburban trains. I always felt hesitant about Chennai's town buses—mainly because of the embarrassment of not having exact change and facing the conductor's wrath.

Though I had heard a year or so ago that digital payment systems were introduced in Chennai's town buses, I remained sceptical. That changed when I discovered my new 'One City, One Card'—purchased for the Metro — could be used across all public transport. Delighted and emboldened, I hopped onto a bus, not even sure where it was headed.

When the conductor approached, I hesitantly handed him my card. He accepted it with ease. I asked if the bus would pass my locality; instead of curtly saying I had boarded the wrong bus, he suggested an alternate stop for me to alight — without a trace of irritation. He swiped the card, handed me the printout, and that was it: no hassle with change.

I was even more awestruck watching other passengers, especially youngsters, buy their tickets. QR codes are prominently displayed inside the bus, and many used the Chennai One app to scan, select their destination, pay online, and generate e-tickets to show the conductor. A few paid through UPI apps, which the conductor patiently processed one by one. Even more striking was how passengers seated or standing far away passed their phones forward with the UPI scanner open. The conductor calmly scanned, issued the printout, and sent the phone back along the chain of hands. It felt like a dream come true.

Boarding a bus without the right change has always felt like walking through a minefield. Paying with a high-denomination note and not getting the balance money immediately often meant spending the journey on tenterhooks — hoping to recover every rupee before alighting. To be fair, conductors faced their own ordeals too, constantly juggling fares and returning change while navigating the chaos of a crowded bus.

I also noticed a marked shift in conductors' attitudes. By and large, they are more patient and eager to assist, especially with digital payments. I read that the Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC) now sells about 20% of its tickets digitally, and the managing director of MTC even felicitated five conductors for recording the highest number of digital transactions in a month. We must salute all those driving these changes—and Bharat's digital ecosystem that makes them possible.

The corporation's change management—quite literally a change management—in this area, despite gaps in other aspects like traffic rule adherence, is truly worthy of a management case study.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Authorities should ensure safe spaces for play

I refer to 'B'luru turns killjoy as children no longer have field day' (June 28). The declining outdoor activities among children and adolescents in Bengaluru is deeply concerning. The excessive use of social media and the shrinking availability of safe playgrounds affect children's physical health, mental well-being, and social development. It is the collective responsibility of parents, schools, and civic authorities to facilitate safe spaces, and encourage the youth to play outdoors by protecting open spaces, creating child-friendly parks, and limiting screen time because every child deserves a safe place to grow, learn, and play.

Suhasini Thapa Mangar, Bengaluru

Conduct safety survey

Apropos 'All 15 victims suffocated to death in Lucknow blaze' (June 26), the postmortem report reveals that all 15 people died in Lucknow within 15-20 minutes of inhaling the toxic gases, like carbon monoxide and hydrogen cyanide, in the smoke caused by the massive fire as a result of the burning of plastic, foam, ,and synthetic materials trapped in a room which was closed from all sides. Four officials, including two engineers, have been suspended after it was found that the building had only a residential permit. In its wake, besides forming a SIT to probe the incident, the UP government has sealed 100 establishments across the state. This is a wake-up call to all the states to conduct a survey to regulate that business is carried out strictly as per government norms.

H R Bapu Satyanarayana, Mysuru

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: **letters@deccanherald.co.in** (only letters emailed – not handwritten – will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT

An SIT has also been formed... A full investigation will be conducted. Several people have already been arrested in this matter... What has happened at the Ram Temple is not good for us. Those involved in corruption should be punished.

Ramdas Athawale, Union Minister
(On the alleged Ram Mandir donation embezzlement case)

What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

TO BE PRECISE

IN PERSPECTIVE

Right to walk: Paving the way

The Karnataka Active Mobility Bill seeks to convert good intentions and technical guidance into action on the ground

PRAVALIKA SARVADEVABHATLA

On any given day in Bengaluru, walking is an act of negotiation.

You weave around parked motorcycles and piles of garbage, step off broken footpaths into traffic, cross roads where zebra markings have faded away, and hope that vehicles slow down long enough for you to get across safely. For millions of citizens — schoolchildren, senior citizens, women, persons with disabilities, street vendors, office-goers, and transit users — this is not an exception. It is the daily experience of moving through the city.

The Supreme Court recently delivered a significant reminder that this condition is neither inevitable nor acceptable. Holding that pedestrians have a fundamental right to safe and unobstructed footpaths under Articles 19(1)(d) and 21 of the Constitution, the court reaffirmed that the right to walk cannot be subordinated to the convenience of motorised traffic.

Yet the reality on India's streets tells a different story. In 2023, 35,221 pedestrians were killed on Indian roads — one in five of all road fatalities. Karnataka has consistently led this grim ranking; Bengaluru alone has lost close to 800 pedestrians in the past three years.

The right exists. The infrastructure often does not. This is why the Karnataka Active Mobility Bill matters. Drafted by the Directorate of Urban Land Transport, the bill seeks to do something that Indian urban policy has struggled with for decades: convert good intentions and technical guidance into action on the ground.

Bengaluru does not suffer from a lack of knowledge. We already know how to build safe and walkable streets. Over the last decade, the Tender SURE guidelines have demonstrated what happens when streets are designed around people rather than vehicles. More than 150 km have been redesigned in the city to integrate footpaths, drainage, utilities, street lighting, and safe intersections. On these corridors, pedestrian volumes increased by 228%, while the share of women using the streets more than doubled. Nine in ten users rate these roads highly walkable, compared to fewer than three in ten on conventional roads. The challenge, therefore, is not design. It is adoption.

Today, whether a citizen gets a safe footpath often depends on which agency is implementing a project, who is reviewing it, and whether pedestrian infrastructure is prioritised during execution. Good standards exist, but compliance remains largely discretionary. This is the gap the Karnataka Active Mobility Bill seeks to close.

If enacted, the bill would move active mobility from the realm of guidance to obligation. It would establish a legal right of way for pedestrians and cyclists, require universal accessibility around transit nodes, enable pedestrian-only zones and slow streets, mandate dedicated budgets, and introduce accountability for non-compliance. Annual safety audits, currently voluntary, would become a statutory requirement.

The idea is neither new nor untested. Singapore's Active Mobility Act introduced dedicated rules, enforcement mechanisms, and investments for walking and cycling infrastructure. It set legal speed limits, banned motorised devices from pedestrian-only paths, and created a dedicated Active Mobility Enforcement Officer cadre. Berlin's Mobility Act legally prioritised pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport in transport planning. Paris used national mobility legislation to pedestrianise public spaces, expand cycling infrastructure, and reduce dependence on private vehicles.

Karnataka is uniquely positioned to act on this lesson. It is the only state in India with a dedicated Directorate of Urban Land Transport, which has spent over a decade building expertise in urban mobility planning, standards, and active mobility. But institutional capacity alone is not enough. The success of the bill will ultimately depend on whether it creates clear standards, dedicated funding, effective enforcement, and accountability for outcomes.

Design standards such as IRC 103, Tender SURE guidelines must be statutorily incorporated, with completion certificates for urban road projects withheld for non-compliance. The bill must also establish a dedicated enforcement mechanism empowered to act against footpath encroachment and pavement parking — currently treated as a minor traffic offence in Bengaluru despite over 1.5 lakh annual violations.

Most importantly, the bill must close the accountability loop. It should define what constitutes a failed safety audit, prescribe mandatory remediation timelines, and assign responsibility for corrective action. Audit findings, including citizen-generated data on missing footpaths, encroachments, and obstruction hotspots, should be published annually and linked to enforceable corrective measures.

The benefits extend far beyond mobility. Walkable cities reduce air pollution, urban heat, non-communicable diseases, and traffic fatalities. They also expand access to jobs, education, and public life — particularly for women, children, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities.

The Supreme Court has reaffirmed that pedestrians have a fundamental right to safe and unobstructed footpaths. Karnataka now has an opportunity to translate that principle into everyday reality.

(The writer is Associate Manager, Jana Urban Space)

'Our aim in Gujarat is to win all the 182 seats'

As the NDA government completes 12 years, C R Patil, considered a close associate of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, talks about governance under the prime minister. Excerpts:

C R Patil, *Union Minister of Jal Shakti in conversation with* **Amrita Madhukalya**

THE DEEP TAKE

● The Modi government has completed 12 years. In 2014, one of the biggest promises was around sanitation. *Har ghar jal* (water in every home) and Swachch Bharat. What is the progress on that front?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a Viksit Bharat by 2047 cannot be achieved if households lack basic toilets. To date, approximately 12 crore toilets have been constructed. A World Health Organization (WHO) report states that 60 crore people have stopped open defecation; about 60,000 children would die annually due to issues linked to open defecation. We have been able to prevent the deaths of approximately three lakh children under five.

Under the Jal Jeevan Mission, tap connections have been provided to 16 crore households so far, and the remaining three crore households will be covered by December 2028. Previously, nine crore women had to travel long distances, spending 5.5 crore hours every day just to fetch water. Today, water has reached more than 95% of the villages across all the north-eastern states, and we have provided testing kits to 25 lakh women.

● It is alleged that the BJP engineered splits in regional parties, such as the NCP, AAP, and now TMC and Shiv Sena.

In West Bengal, when the TMC lost, it wasn't just the people of West Bengal who rejoiced; the entire nation was happy. They used to win by unfair means, and the Election Commission did not allow them to do this. A day after the BJP formed the government, TMC MPs and MLAs left the party and carved out their own identity. The Shiv Sena situation is similar; there is a lack of leadership there, and people feel they have no future. I believe that in the coming days, other parties, where members feel their political future is coming to an end, will face the same situation.

● When Operation Sindoor happened, Pakistan's water supply was cut off by your ministry. Your action drew a lot of flak...

In Gujarati, there's a saying, *Ghar na chokra ghaant jaake upa jaane ato* (no flour for the children but enough for a saint). How is it okay? We have water shortages in many states, and we give our water to others, how can a treaty even take place? And our neighbour, to whom we are giving the water, is coming and attacking us.

I think this treaty should not have happened, and not a single drop of water should go to Pakistan. At the time this treaty was thought of, the Lok Sabha was not informed, and the Cabinet did not take the decision. There could be pressure.

● Do you see any challenges in Gujarat, which is going to the polls in 2027?

There is still one-and-a-half years left, and our aim is to win all the 182 seats. Last time, we won 156, and this time we target 26 more. The Aam Admi Party was touted to do big, but no one talks about the fact that its candidates lost deposits in 126 seats. The Congress has only 12 seats in the Assembly. The most important thing in politics is trust, and Modi *saheb* has that trust. People believe that whatever he says he will do.

● You are seen as a close associate of PM Modi. Do you think he will continue to lead the country in 2029, or will the country seek a change?

Look, he is deeply grounded – a man connected to the grassroots who understands people's problems and has solutions. In October, he will complete 25 years as a public representative, winning all the elections he has contested since 2001. He first became chief minister, then boldly stepped up to become prime minister, and now the country desires and needs his leadership. It is my view that he should certainly contest the election in 2029, and I am confident that he will.

Many senior Congress leaders have acknowledged that they should learn certain things from the BJP. The BJP, which held power under Atal*ji* in the past, had a different level of discipline. We used to see that Rajya Sabha MPs didn't have much work previously, whereas now, MPs remain busy throughout the year.

Leaders like Atal*ji* and Advani*ji* were moderates. I feel that under Modi *saheb*'s leadership, the approach is absolutely decisive. If one is a moderate, trying to balance all sides, decisions might be taken, but they often cannot be implemented, and no one benefits. That is why instilling discipline within the party was the primary necessity.

The first Election Commission built India's democracy by ensuring every eligible citizen found a place on the electoral roll. The current SIR drifts from that tradition

DEVANOORA MAHADEVA

People gather during a hearing of the special intensive revision of the electoral rolls in Balurghat, West Bengal, in December 2025. PTI

Revision of voter list: Special or skewed?

'To be included in the voter list is the fundamental right of the voter; my duty, as the chief election commissioner, is to ensure that no voter is left out.' This was the declaration made by Sukumar Sen, India's very first Chief Election Commissioner. He painstakingly prepared the electoral rolls. Ballot boxes travelled on camels, horses, and donkeys to reach distant polling booths. And when the elections were conducted, the world that had declared mockingly that democracy would never be possible in India was left completely dumbfounded.

Through that sheer feat of preparing the voter list and conducting elections, an administratively fragmented India transformed into a politically unified entity. That was how the very foundation of India's democracy was built... around Sen's vision. He laid the building blocks of our electoral democracy. The ongoing 'Special Intensive Revision' is dismantling that very structure.

Let me explain: In our part of India, the word *gyana* is used to mean knowledge *(gnana)*, caution, and mindfulness. If someone works senselessly, we admonish them thus: "Have you lost your *gyana*?" Such senseless people are deliberately kept away from responsible tasks.

It terrifies me to see how our country is being governed today.

The Supreme Court of India had passed an order regarding the selection of the Chief Election Commissioner. It said, "... until Parliament enacts a law in this regard, a three-member committee comprising the Chief Justice of India, the Prime Minister, and the Leader of the Opposition shall make the selection."

In a move that reflected poor institutional *gyana*, and defied this Supreme Court order, the Union government brought in a deeply flawed law to select the commissioner. This law allowed for the formation of a committee consisting of the prime minister, a senior Cabinet minister nominated by the prime minister, and the Leader of the Opposition. The presence of two members from the ruling party means that decisions are made unilaterally.

Because of this *gyana*-less move, Gyanesh Kumar was selected as India's chief election commissioner. The post of the chief election commissioner conceived in this manner is akin to an extension of the ruling party and not the independent constitutional authority it should be. Now, the appointee is simply fulfilling the wishes of the party higher-ups. That is exactly what this distressing 'special' intensive revision of the voter list is all about.

All these years, the revision of the voter list would happen naturally. Periodic revisions of the voter list are, of course, necessary to remove the names of the deceased, add the names of those who have attained voting age, regularise people who have migrated, and correct duplicate voter IDs.

But what is happening now is an 'urgent' special intensive revision, apparently to detect and throw out foreign infiltrators across India.

This special intensive revision (SIR) has already taken place in 13 states and three Union Territories. When the SIR happened in West Bengal, the Trinamool Congress asked how many foreign infiltrators were caught. The Election Commission responded with silence. In Bihar, independent journalists uncovered and revealed that the number of people identified as foreign infiltrators was 200. Apparently, 194 of them are Nepali women who came to Bihar after marrying Bihari men!

The marriage ties between Bihar and Nepal have traditionally existed for generations. Yet, the Election Commission mindlessly classified our daughters-in-law as infiltrators. Only those who are entirely ignorant of India's culture and traditions could do such a thing. This should not be tolerated. In what appears to be a case of levelling a mountain to catch a mouse, the remaining six people 'caught' were reportedly Bangladeshi Muslims. But isn't it the Intelligence Bureau's job to track down a handful of foreign nationals?

Now, to cover up its failures, the government has unleashed its brigade to manufacture fake news. Here is one such piece of news: "The SIR is so effective that *ghar wapsi* (returning home) is happening among illegal Bangladeshi immigrants." The tone of that statement implies, 'See how potent Modi's magic is.' Along with this, they publicised a picture showing a crowd of frail-looking people crossing a flimsy bridge. When the fact-checking team at Boom Live analysed that picture, it turned out to be an image from Mongla Ghat in the Khulna district, deep inside Bangladesh, showing thousands of people doing their daily commute for work, and not a picture of the India-Bangladesh border. Despite this, the brigade's empire of lies continues to roar.

Furthermore, in the SIRs that have already occurred, 50-60 million voters have been excluded. Of these, 66% are women, including those who relocated to their husbands' homes after marriage. The rest are predominantly villagers, migrants who moved from villages to urban slums, Dalits, marginalised communities, nomads, Adivasis, and, alongside them, minority Muslims, who are being specially targeted to be weeded out in as many numbers as possible.

Considering all this, what is happening right now is not a special intensive revision but a skewed intensive revision. Voters are reportedly required to fill out forms, which in itself poses a challenge in India. Then, they apparently compare the 2025 voter list with the 2002 voter list. During this cross-checking, the spelling of the voter's name and the spelling of the father's name must reportedly perfectly match. This logic might work for Western languages. In our native languages, spelling varies with pronunciations, and pronunciation varies with individuals. Spelling differences are bound to happen. One needs to understand this reality rather than just hunt for faults.

In the name of 'logical discrepancies', lakhs of voters have reportedly been excluded. If all voters are viewed through the same dubious lens, as criminals, it is a tragic journey. And for what reason is this revision being done with impossibly tight deadlines, without even giving people room to breathe? And there appear to be hidden reasons too.

After Shaheen Bagh, there has been little or no talk of the National Register of Citizens. If one were to ask the NRC, 'Where did you vanish, oh ghost?', it would probably reply, 'Where would I go, sir? I am sitting safely hidden right inside the SIR!'

In the tradition established by the first Election Commissioner Sukumar Sen, officials scoured forests, hills, slums, and deserts to ensure every voter was included. Such things happen only when there is an earnest belief that voters are the fundamental bricks of the great house of democracy. Back then, there was the Gandhian spirit, Nehru's leadership, and Ambedkar's Constitution serving as the guiding force.

Today, those ruling India are the ideological descendants of Hedgewar, Golwalkar, and Savarkar. They are actively plucking out and throwing away the 'voter' bricks from the house of democracy. What else can happen other than for the house of democracy to ultimately collapse on its own?

Some individuals who were struck off the voter list as 'dead' must approach the judiciary to declare, 'We are alive,' but even then haven't received justice. What does this mean? Are the voters dead? Or is it our judiciary that is dead? Or is it the CEC, after politically killing the living, who is dead? What about our prime minister? Nothing is certain anymore.

(The author is a Kannada writer and a public intellectual. Views expressed are personal)

The cost of a falling rupee beyond trade

TARU SAIGAL AND MANU SHARMA

Public discourse invariably centres on inflation or fuel prices, and the rising prices of imports when the rupee depreciates. But one of the most important outcomes of currency depreciation that is not often discussed is its effect on higher education. The falling rupee is an invisible factor making international education dearer and less accessible for the growing number of Indian families.

This issue is not negligible any more. According to the data presented by the Ministry of External Affairs in Parliament, about 13,35,878 Indian students were enrolled in higher education in 108 countries around the world in 2024. This was a spike from 9,07,404 in 2022 and 13,18,955 in 2023, emphasising the increasing significance of overseas education.

Exchange rate movements have financial implications for these families. Annual tuition fees and living costs of $50,000 for a master's programme, which costs approximately Rs 40 lakh at the rate of Rs 80 per US dollar, rise to about Rs 45 lakh when the rupee drops to Rs 90 per dollar. While the quality of education remains unaltered, the family needs to bear an additional burden of Rs 5 lakh each year due to fluctuating exchange rates.

The burden of tuition fees is not the only worry. Accommodation, health insurance, transportation, visa charges and daily living expenses are all paid in foreign currency. The declining rupee wreaks havoc on years of savings for a child's education and prompts painful financial decisions for households.

This challenge is especially important for educational opportunity. Students from wealthier families may be better equipped to deal with a change in the exchange rate. The middle-income groups, however, have much less room to manoeuvre. With the cost of overseas education increasing, opportunities to study overseas may increasingly be tied more to financial means than academic merit.

The implications are not only for individual families but also for the broader community as a whole. Increased costs may affect student choice of the course and place of study. As time goes by, academic priorities and career aspirations may slowly be replaced with financial considerations about affordability. The effect of currency fluctuation actually starts playing a role in the educational choices, which should be made based on talent, ambition and intellectual curiosity.

The issue also raises the larger question of the higher education system in India. While there have been significant gains in the last few years, many students are still seeking out opportunities for further study abroad, exposure to international culture, and boarded credentials. Families are willing to pay higher prices even in times of currency devaluation, indicating that there is still demand for such opportunities.

This reality cannot be merely a 'private home affair'. Each student who goes to a foreign country for study is a drain on foreign exchange. The number of students studying abroad continues to grow, and the educational expenditure is a big part of India's international payments. While the trade of goods, such as oil and electronics, is discussed, the internationalisation of the education sector should not be left out.

One possible response could be the rising number of foreign university campuses in India in recent years. Such institutions allow students to have internationally recognised degrees closer to their homes, thereby helping them to avail themselves of higher-quality education without the effect of volatility of exchange rates. At the same time, India should persist in investing in research universities, faculty development and academic infrastructure to provide opportunities that are world-class within the country.

None of this is an argument against overseas education. Studying abroad not only develops skills and perspectives in individuals but also benefits the overall economy. However, with currency weakening, access to these prospects becomes increasingly challenging for families with limited financial resources.

The rupee's depreciation often makes headlines in financial news channels and market reports and is often pictured as a macroeconomic measure. But behind every move in the exchange rate exists a human story of dreams and sacrifices. What does this mean for the future of social mobility in India if access to a top-notch education increasingly depends on the financial stability of a family rather than the aptitude of a student?

(Taru is an independent researcher, and Manu is an assistant professor of economics at the Jaipuria Institute of Management, Jaipur)

OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 YEARS AGO: JUNE 1976

Hijacked jet in Uganda: Amin talks to guerillas

Nairobi, June 28
President Idi Amin of Uganda today went to Entebbe Airport near Kampala and began negotiations for the release of more than 250 people held there by pro-Palestinian guerillas aboard a hijacked French airliner. M. Pierre Renard, French Ambassador to Uganda, also went to the airport where the Air France plane landed early this morning after a flight from Libya. The Airbus was seized yesterday over Greece by the guerillas after a stopover in Athens en route to Paris from Tel Aviv.

25 YEARS AGO: JUNE 2001

No compromise on J&K's territorial status, says Govt

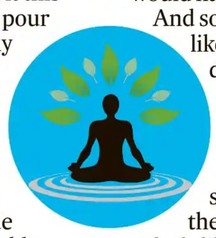
New Delhi, June 28
India today ruled out any compromise on its firm position that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of the Indian Union and disclosed that it had conveyed to Pakistan its opposition to any idea of a meeting between General Pervez Musharraf and the Hurriyat leadership during next month's bilateral summit. Speaking to newsmen here, a spokesperson of the External Affairs Ministry asserted that "at no stage have we said we are rescinding from our position that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India."

OASIS | ANITHA RAMACHANDER

The real work of manifestation

We all want something. A promotion that feels long overdue. A relationship that finally clicks. A life that, even just a little, resembles the one we dreamed of when we were younger, when the world still felt wide open. Ask anyone what they hope for, and they will tell you straight away. Wanting has never been the difficult part. The real question is whether truly believing in something can help bring it closer.

That is what manifestation is really about. Not daydreaming or crossing your fingers and hoping for the best, but something far more intentional. It is about holding what you want not as some distant maybe, but as something already on its way to you. The Law of Attraction puts it this way: what you consistently pour into yourself, you eventually draw toward you. Many people will tell you it genuinely changed things for them. Others think it is not true. But most who give it a real try will quietly admit that something inside them shifts. It is not the world and it is not immediate, but it is them. They live their lives, knowing better what they want. They do not waste time on things that never would have taken them where they wanted to go. They begin to see possibilities they would have just passed by before.



And something that once seemed like a dream begins to feel like a destination.

Honestly, this might be the most real thing anyone can say about manifestation. Life will wear you down. The small let-downs, the waiting, the moments when giving up feels like the smartest thing you could do. Believing in something will not stop any of that from happening. But it keeps you from falling apart when it does. It brings you back to why you started. And sometimes that is all you need to show up one more time.

Going from "maybe one day" to "this is happening" rewires something in you. The way you think, the chances you are willing to take, the effort you show up with, even on the flat and unremarkable days when nothing feels worth it.

Whether the universe is listening or your own mind is simply performing at its best when it has a clear target, that question may miss the point entirely. Believe in it enough and you will find a way. That has probably always been true.

Exclusion risks, accountability: SC's SIR verdict vulnerable to criticism

Experts flag underplaying mass deletions, and interpretation of EC's plenary powers

ASHISH TRIPATHI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

With the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls gaining steam in Karnataka, the large-scale voter roll verification exercise by the Election Commission, aimed at cleansing electoral rolls through intensive door-to-door checks and documentation, has once again drawn attention after sparking widespread debate and legal challenges.

In its judgment delivered on May 27, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi unanimously upheld the SIR, ruling it constitutionally valid under Article 324 and Section 21(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 (RPA).

Delivered months after key elections, including Bihar, the verdict has been criticised by a section of legal experts for inadequate engagement with ground realities, and potential long-term risks to voting rights.

The SIR involved enumeration forms, restricted acceptable documents, and verification against older baseline rolls (such as 2003 in Bihar). Petitioners argued that it led to arbitrary disenfranchisement, particularly affecting the poor, migrants, women, and minorities, by reversing presumptions of validity for enrolled voters and imposing burdensome requirements akin to citizenship scrutiny.

The court addressed four key issues: the EC's authority, legitimacy and proportionality of the exercise, compliance with statutory rules, and the scope of citizenship examination. It held that Section 21(3) of the RPA provided broad discretion for special revisions. The exercise was seen as advancing free and fair elections by ensuring roll accuracy. Proportionality was satisfied through legitimate purpose, rational nexus, and safeguards like claims/objections and referrals for doubtful cases.

ROLLS & ROWS

- SC held SIR valid under Article 324 and Section 21(3) of RPA
- Verdict criticised for weak engagement with ground realities
- Critics highlight disenfranchisement of poor, women, minorities
- Large-scale deletions acknowledged but minimised as remediable

The presumption from prior enrollment was rebuttable, and EC's scrutiny was limited to electoral eligibility, not final citizenship adjudication under the Citizenship Act.

Despite acknowledging the need for accurate rolls, the judgment's reasoning is vulnerable to criticism on several fronts. The court expansively interpreted the EC's plenary powers under Article 324 without robustly addressing accountability and independence concerns. Fourth-branch institutions require strong accountability mechanisms alongside autonomy; the ruling tilts heavily towards the latter.

The bench accepted claims regarding migration and inaccuracies, with limited demand for hard data on the scale of problems or the SIR's superior effectiveness compared to routine revisions. Less restrictive alternatives received insufficient consideration.

Initiating intensive verification close to elections, with judicial validation coming after polls, creates irreversible disenfranchisement for affected voters in that cycle. By allowing demands for proof and deletions, the process effectively creates barriers to voting rights pending resolution.

The unanimous opinion lacks dissenting perspectives, reinforcing concerns of judicial alignment with institutional claims over individual rights safeguards—echoing critiques of deferential "moments" in constitutional history.

The judgment legitimised intensive revisions across states but prioritised roll purity over maximal inclusion. It highlighted gaps in electoral institutional design, calling for legislative reforms such as clearer guidelines, transparency mandates and independent audits.

Legal experts felt accurate rolls are essential, yet the Constitution demands broad political equality. By placing strong trust in EC execution amid concerns, the court has chosen a path that may facilitate stricter future exercises. A more sceptical, rights-centric approach would better align with democratic fundamentals. The SIR verdict was doctrinally consistent but constitutionally questionable for underplaying exclusion risks and accountability needs, they said.

Congress plan to unseat BJP in T'puram falters

ARJUN RAGHUNATH
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
DHNS

The Congress-led United Democratic Front's (UDF) plan to move a no-confidence motion against the ruling BJP in the Thiruvananthapuram corporation suffered a setback as the CPM-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) decided not to back it.

The UDF only has 20 seats and the LDF 29 in the 101-member council. Hence, both fronts, on their own, are short of one-third of the council's strength, which is required to move no-confidence motions.

The BJP is tight-rope-walking with 50 members in the council. It attained power with the support of an independent member.

However, the situation became grim for the saffron party when one of its councillors, R Sugathan, was recently taken into preventive custody by the police owing to his alleged involvement in a series of criminal cases.

The CPM leadership maintains that the Congress did not consult them on the plans to move the no-confidence motion. Hence, they are not supporting it. Meanwhile, upset over the CPM's stand, the Congress alleged a nexus between the BJP and the Left party.

Last year, The BJP won the city corporation for the first time, and turned it into a big celebration, with even Prime Minister Narendra Modi coming down for it.

Police recreate Lohagad Fort murder scene using dummy

MUMBAI, DHNS: Police on Sunday took Siya Goyal, an accused in the alleged murder of her fiance and Pune realtor Ketan Agarwal, to Lohagad Fort to reconstruct the crime scene, using a dummy to recreate the moment he was pushed to his death.

Siya Goyal and her 'boyfriend' Chetan Chaudhury had allegedly pushed Ketan Agarwal (26) from the top of the Lohagad Fort, located in the hill station of Lonavla in Pune district, on June 18.

As part of the exercise, the dummy, which was around the weight of Ketan, was pushed down off the walls of the Fort.

The reconstruction of events revealed that Chetan allegedly came from behind and suddenly pushed Ketan, causing him to lose his balance and fall approximately 300 feet into a deep gorge, leading to immediate death. However, officials have refused to divulge the details.

3 juveniles held for strangling minor boy to death in Jaipur

JAIPUR, PTI: Three juveniles have been detained for allegedly murdering a 10-year-old boy in Jaipur.

Police claimed that the crime was committed to avenge an earlier dispute involving the victim and the sister of one of the accused.

According to police, the victim and the accused were neighbours living in the same locality.

The boy had been missing since June 14, and his body was recovered from a drain near a water tank in the Muhana police station area on June 25. His severed head was found a short distance away. The juveniles allegedly lured the boy to a secluded place on some pretext where they strangled him.

Wangchuk starts hunger strike to support CJP

Protest seeks resignation of Education Minister

NEW DELHI, DHNS

Activist Sonam Wangchuk and CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke during a protest in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) on Sunday escalated its protest in demanding Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation, with activist Sonam Wangchuk beginning his hunger strike eight days after students and the youth launched their protest here.

Before the launch of the fast at Jantar Mantar, where the CJP had started a sit-in on June 20, Wangchuk and CJP functionaries—Abhijeet Dipke, Sourav Das, and Ashutosh Ranka, among others—visited Rajghat to pay tributes to Mahatma Gandhi.

At the protest site, six All India Students' Association (AISA) activists — including its president Neha—and JNU Students Union joint secretary Danish Ali, also started a hunger strike in solidarity, while several farmer leaders gathered at the venue to announce their support.

Last Thursday, Wangchuk said he would sit on a fast from Sunday if at least one of the CJP's demands — Pradhan's resignation or giving more power to Ladakh – was not met by then.

Addressing the protesters, Wangchuk said, "I have been forced to sit here. I am not doing this happily. Many people ask me: 'You were doing a movement in Ladakh. Why are you with CJP now?' Education, which is the issue here, has been close to my heart for the last 40 years, since I was a student."

He added, "I did engineering, but never took a job because I felt the key to all generations was in education. When some youths raised their voices on issues with the education system, how could I have remained silent? It was natural for me to support them."

On Ladakh, he said that protecting the Himalayas was everyone's responsibility, as tens of crores of people depended on water originating from the region.

He said if the government had shown sensitivity, they would not have had to go through this and sit here in such heat.

Acknowledging the hunger strike by others, he said he wanted people to make it a community hunger strike and observe at least a day-long fast.

Yogi dares Akhilesh on Krishna Janmabhoomi

SANJAY PANDEY
LUCKNOW, DHNS

The next Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh may still be several months away, the war of words between Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav has already started.

Yogi Adityanath

Adityanath on Sunday lashed out against Akhilesh after the latter said his party would make Ayodhya a 'truly religious town' and ensure its all-round development.

"You (Akhilesh) should stop worrying about Ayodhya... Instead seek atonement... pay a visit to Ram Lala at least once... that may bring you some wisdom," Adityanath said while addressing a public meeting in Hathras.

He also dared Akhilesh to speak on Shreekrishna Janmabhoomi issue and asked him to clarify if the SP chief was in favour launching a movement for the 'liberation' of the same. "Do you have the courage to say it?" he added.

In 2020, a Lucknow-based advocate and six others filed a petition in the lower court to remove the 17th century Shahi Idgah mosque from the premises that ir shares with Katra Keshav dev temple in Mathura that is close to the spot considered Krishna Janmabhoomi. The case is sub judice now.

Adityanath also referred to the firing on the 'karsevaks' in Ayodhya during the Mulayam Singh Yadav regime and Akhilesh's 'refusal' to attend the consecration ceremony of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya.

Earlier in the day, the Samajwadi Party chief said the alleged 'embezzlement' of offerings in the Ram Temple was a 'betrayal' of faith of millions of people.

FURY AND FLAME

Congress lawmaker Praniti Shinde leads a torchlight march against the Centre and state governments over the paper leak issue, in Solapur, Maharashtra, on Sunday. PTI

North burns as NE reels under floods

GUWAHATI/NEW DELHI, DHNS & PTI

Heavy rain, flash floods and landslides continue to wreak havoc in north Bengal, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh even as northern states continue to suffer from heatwave condition.

In Arunachal Pradesh's Keyi Panyor, the worst hit among the districts, three people have died in rain-triggered flash floods. The state has reported at least 61 landslides and eight deaths while over 70,000 people have remained affected in June so far.

The Disaster Management Department on Sunday issued warning based on forecast about heavy rains in five districts—Lower Subansiri, Papumpare, Lower Siang, East Siang and Leparada.

Alert about moderate rain and possible flash floods were also sounded in several other districts. "IMD (India Meteorological Department) officials informed that there is a possibility of more than 200 mm rainfall in the next 24 hours in the state," said a warning issued by the department.

The department said Changlang, Dibang Valley, East Kameng, Lower Subansiri, Papumpare, Tirap, West Kameng, Anjaw and Kurung Kumey districts are at the risk of moderate flash floods on Monday.

Meanwhile, Delhi recorded its warmest morning on Sunday in two years amid the delayed seasonal rainfall.

IMD said in a release that conditions are favourable for further advance of the southwest monsoon into some more parts of the North Arabian Sea and some areas of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, among other states, during the next two to three days.

However, it also warned of heatwave conditions — possibly severe — in Uttar Pradesh on June 28-29. According to weather forecasting agency Skymet, Delhi is likely to see the arrival of monsoon on July 4 if conditions remain favourable.

Although flash floods and landslides are not new in Arunachal Pradesh or other parts of the hilly North East, experts say increasing construction projects—including roads, highways and hydro power — have led to destruction of hills in the past few decades. This, coupled with climate change, is resulting in frequent and more hazardous disasters.

Srinagar mercury touches 33.8°C; rain relief next month

ZULFIKAR MAJID
SRINAGAR, DHNS

A woman and her children walk in the rain in Srinagar. PTI FILE

Known across the country as a cool summer escape from the plains, Kashmir is currently witnessing an unusual spell of heat, with Srinagar recording its hottest day of the season at 33.8° C on Sunday.

The rise in temperatures over the past few days has affected much of the Valley, surprising tourists who usually associate Kashmir with relief from the intense heat sweeping large parts of India.

Even the Valley's most popular tourist destinations, known for their cool climate, have not been spared.

Pahalgam—one of the base camps for the Amarnath Yatra and a major tourist resort — registered 27.7° C, while Gulmarg, the famed ski resort and gondola destination, recorded 24.8° C.

In the Jammu region, Jammu city remained significantly hotter at 37.0° C, underscoring the sharp climatic contrast within the Union Territory.

Meteorological officials said the prevailing dry conditions were likely to continue till the end of June.

A major change in weather is expected between July 1 and July 4, when a fresh western disturbance is likely to interact with advancing monsoon winds. The system is expected to bring widespread rainfall, thunderstorms, gusty winds, lightning and isolated hailstorms across J&K.

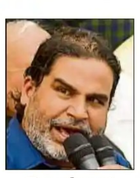
Officials said temperatures were likely to fall noticeably after the wet spell. However, they cautioned that intense showers and strong winds could trigger localised disruptions in hilly and vulnerable areas.

For tourists, the upcoming shift is expected to ease conditions after an unusually warm phase that briefly altered Kashmir's usual summer weather experience.

Kishor weighs Bihar bypoll bid after 2025 debacle

ABHAY KUMAR
PATNA

After his party's disastrous showing in the 2025 Bihar Assembly elections, where all 243 candidates were defeated, Jan Suraaj founder Prashant Kishor is likely to contest the ensuing bypoll.



Prashant Kishor

The election strategist-turned-politician is weighing the party's demand that he contest the bypoll from the Bankipur Assembly constituency in Patna, necessitated by the resignation of BJP national president Nitin Nabin, who quit as MLA after being elevated to the RS.

"If my party decides that I should contest the Bankipur byelection and give the BJP a crushing defeat, which will also be a decisive vote against the Samrat Choudhary regime, then I am ready to throw my hat into the poll ring," Kishor told an electronic media outlet.

"During the 2025 elections, Bankipur voters voted in the name of Nitish Kumar, not Samrat Choudhary. They now feel cheated after Nitish's removal as Bihar CM, since Samrat is not an elected leader but a selected one, imposed on Bihar by the Modi-Shah combine," said Kishor, who had drawn criticism during the elections for not contesting himself.

Kishor had earlier hinted he might contest from Raghopur against RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, but backed out at the last moment, saying he would not be able to campaign for other party candidates if he entered the fray himself.

"Having learnt from past mistakes, Kishor may now contest from Bankipur once the Election Commission announces poll dates. But it remains to be seen how the voters of Bankipur, who are BJP loyalists since 1990 (the party has been unbeaten here for the last 36 years), will respond," said veteran political commentator Ajay Kumar.

Defections unethical & for power, personal gains: Voters

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Women wait in queue at a polling station to cast their votes. PTI FILE

Defection may be the buzzword in the political power corridors but a majority of the citizens, who vote to choose their representatives, believe that it is "unethical" to switch sides — a decision that they believe is often part of the power game or personal gains.

A recent poll conducted by VoteVibe India — a platform tracking voter mood, governance and election trends — showed that only 2.4% respondents believe that a leader switches sides due to "genuine change" in political vibes.

Around two-third of the respondents also felt that the anti-defection law in the country is weak.

The poll reveals the citizens' mood at a time when the Trinamool Congress and the Shiv Sena (UBT) are experiencing a churn with mass defections.

Around one in every three respondents felt defections engineered by ruling parties is a "systematic and real phenomenon" while 24.8% believed it is "occasional and overstated".

According to the poll that had a sample of over 1,000 across India, 67.8% found it "wrong and unethical" while only 16.2% found it acceptable. Opposition supporters (74.4%) were more disapproving than NDA voters (62.7%), it said.

Top factors

The poll betrayed people's disapproval of defections with 55.9% believing that personal, financial gains or inducements as the reason for switching sides. Differences with leadership or ideology got 13% votes while 9.4% gave it to pressure from other parties.

Only 2.4% felt that defections were due to "genuine change in political beliefs" while 15.8% gave it to gain power or join the government.

Only 16% approved the idea of 'two-third merger' route, as in the case of the Trinamool Congress Lok Sabha MPs and AAP Rajya Sabha MPs, while a whopping 66.2% wanted a defector MP or MLA to resign before shifting sides.

Amitabh Tiwari of Vote Vibe India told *DH*, "People realise that the anti-defection law is weak and they want to close the loopholes. The poll shows that a substantial number of them do not want such MPs or MLAs who resign to be allowed to contest again. Some want bypoll expenses to be recovered from MPs or MLAs who forced the bypoll."

At the same time, Tiwari said, what is still currently visible is that people are not outrightly just blaming parties for this but individuals concerned.

Modi Cabinet reshuffle buzz builds

NEW DELHI, PTI

A reshuffle in the council of ministers of the Modi government seems imminent, with indications from the top echelons of the ruling dispensation that the exercise may be carried out anytime from now — possibly before the Monsoon session of Parliament begins.

Sources aware of the deliberations said the reshuffle in the Union Council of Ministers will be carried out in tandem with the announcement of a new BJP team under its president, Nitin Nabin.

"Team Nitin Nabin" is likely to be announced soon, as the BJP top brass is believed to have finalised the list, with younger faces expected to be deployed in prominent organisational roles.

The sources indicate that the BJP president also held consultations with a few Union ministers of state last week. There are strong possibilities of some Union ministers being sent to take organisational roles in the BJP and party office-bearers being inducted into the Modi ministry.

Speculation is rife about portfolio changes for some ministers, while the future of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan is under a cloud, given controversies over the NEET paper leak and irregularities in the CBSE digital marking system.

BEFORE SESSION?

- Shuffle likely before Monsoon session, usually scheduled in July 3rd week
- Speculation looms over future of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan
- Breakaway MPs from TMC, Shiv Sena (UBT) may secure ministerial posts
- Representatives from poll-bound states of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Punjab likely to find spot

The sources suggested that the reshuffle, if it happens, may take place sometime in July, ahead of the Monsoon Session of Parliament, which normally begins in the third week of the month.

Two Union ministers — Pankaj Chaudhary and Harsh Malhotra — have already been appointed as party unit chiefs in Uttar Pradesh and Delhi, respectively. The BJP will likely follow its 'one man, one post' rule, which would lead to the duo's exit from the government.

Two other Union ministers — George Kurian and Ravneet Singh Bittu — were not renominated by the BJP for the recently concluded Rajya Sabha polls.

Following the BJP's West Bengal victory, some of its MPs from the state could be inducted into the Union Ministry. A few representatives of the rebel Trinamool and Shiv Sena (UBT) groups may also secure ministerial berths. It is also suggested that a senior functionary of the Shinde-led Shiv Sena may be inducted as a Cabinet minister. One or two faces among the seven Rajya Sabha MPs who deserted the AAP to join the BJP could find a place in the council of ministers, the sources said.

However, any decision to induct members from the breakaway TMC and Shiv Sena (UBT) factions will depend on the Lok Sabha Speaker's ruling, given that their respective parent parties have sought their disqualification under the Anti-Defection Law.

Top court: No contributory negligence for driver who rammed unmarked truck

Notes that truck-owner failed to produce evidence supporting a proper parking claim

ASHISH TRIPATHI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Supreme Court has ruled that a car driver cannot be held contributorily negligent for crashing into a truck parked on a busy Delhi road in the dead of night without any parking lights, reflectors, or warning signs.

A bench of Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and N V Anjaria delivered the verdict while holding the truck driver and owner primarily responsible for the fatal accident, dismissing an appeal by Oriental Insurance Company and partly allowing the plea of the claimants in a 2013 motor accident case that claimed the life of a 20-year-old Chartered Accountancy student.

The court observed in the June 23 judgment that when a heavy vehicle was left unattended on the road in predawn hours without any precautionary measures, it created a serious hazard to other road users.

The mere fact that the car hit the truck from behind did not automatically imply negligence on the car-driver's part, especially when the truck-owner failed to produce evidence supporting a proper parking claim, it said.

The accident occurred around 3 am on June 11, 2013, near the Andrews Ganj Bus Stop on the BRT Corridor in Delhi. The deceased, Akash Kumar, was travelling in the car driven by his roommate Nikhil Kumar Jain when it collided with the stationary truck, positioned in the middle of the road without any indicators or cautionary signs.

The Motor Accident Claims Tribunal (MACT) had held the truck driver negligent, rejected the insurer's plea of contributory negligence, and awarded compensation of Rs 81.21 lakh with 9% interest. The Delhi High Court upheld the decision, prompting cross-appeals before the Supreme Court.

The apex court noted that the injured car-driver's eyewitness testimony remained unshaken. It also drew an adverse inference against the truck owner for not stepping into the witness box to substantiate claims of mechanical issues or proper parking on the extreme left.

On the quantum of compensation, the court refused to interfere with the MACT's assessment of the deceased's future earning potential, describing it as liberal yet evidence-based.

However, it enhanced the total compensation by Rs 80,000 towards "filial consortium" for the parents, and directed the insurer to pay the enhanced amount of Rs 82.01 lakh within four weeks.

Indian humanitarian aid reached Venezuela: Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, PTI: Relief supplies, medical equipment and a field hospital unit, sent to quake-hit Venezuela under Operation Amistad, has reached that country, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Sunday and asserted that this humanitarian assistance will bolster ongoing relief efforts there.

The Union minister shared the update in a post on X.

"Indian assistance reaches Venezuela. Confident that the Field Hospital Unit, relief supplies, medicines and medical equipment, will bolster ongoing post-earthquake relief efforts in the country. #OperationAmistad," he posted and also shared some photos of the consignment.

The Indian Air Force, in a post on X, also shared an update on Operation Amistad.

"Responding with speed, reach and compassion, two #IndianAirForce C-17 Globemaster III aircraft completed a demanding 23-hour flight to Venezuela, covering an aerial distance of over 14,000 km from Delhi to Caracas," it said.

The aircraft landed at Maiquetía International Airport, Caracas, carrying 66 tonnes of humanitarian aid, including an Indian Army field hospital, over 35 tonnes of relief supplies, medicines and medical equipment, and two BHISHM Cubes, "demonstrating India's capability to deliver hope across continents whenever called upon," the IAF said.

Kuki-Zo body sets 48-hr deadline to clear blockades

KANGPOKPI (MANIPUR), PTI

A Kuki-Zo organisation in Manipur's Kangpokpi urged the central and state governments to remove all blockades, allegedly by Naga groups, along the national and state highways passing through the district.

In a statement, the Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU) said that following joint deliberation with all civil society organisations (CSOs) of Kangpokpi, it unanimously resolved to "serve a 48-hour ultimatum", effective from Sunday midnight, for removing all blockades.

The development came in the wake of a price rise and depleting stocks of essential commodities in the Kuki-Zo majority district, caused by the blockades on NH-2 and NH-37, sources said.

CoTU said road transportation, the "lifeline of the people and backbone of economic activities", has remained severely disrupted for over a month due to blockades and unauthorised checkpoints allegedly manned by Naga groups.

"This has caused immense hardship in the transport of essential commodities, medicines, medical supplies, and the free movement of the public," it said.

CoTU and participating CSOs demanded that the Manipur government, in coordination with the Centre and security agencies, immediately remove all unauthorised checkpoints and gates along national and state highways and restore unrestricted public access within 48 hours.

CoTU warned that failure to comply will compel the Kuki-Zo community to undertake "appropriate and pre-emptive democratic measures" to safeguard the interests, rights, and security of the general public.

Manipur, where more than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic conflict between Meiteis and Kukis, is currently witnessing strife between Kukis and Nagas, both hill communities, since February this year. The latest phase of the conflict saw several killings and abductions.

PM calls for eco-friendly Ganesh idols made from clay, asks to conserve water

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday appealed to the public ahead of the upcoming Ganesh Utsav to choose environment-friendly idols made from natural clay or soil instead of those made from Plaster of Paris (PoP).

In his monthly radio programme Mann Ki Baat, the PM highlighted the importance of celebrating festivals sustainably. Though the festival was still months away, idol-making had already begun, he noted.

"I urge you to ensure that the idol of Ganpati Bappa installed in your home, society, or neighbourhood is made from the soil of our own country and crafted by the hands of our own potters and local artisans," he said.

Narendra Modi

He further appealed to manufacturers and buyers alike: "I also urge those who make Ganesh idols to prioritise clay idols, and I ask buyers to check what the idol is made of and which country it was produced in. Do not buy idols made of Plaster of Paris at all."

The PM explained the environmental benefits of clay idols, noting how they dissolved naturally in water after immersion, thereby protecting rivers, ponds, and the overall ecosystem.

Modi also stressed the need for water conservation, calling on citizens not to let the momentum of the "Catch the Rain" campaign weaken.

"We must save every single drop of rainwater... So, I urge you especially: Let us come together to save every drop of rain," he said.

MISCELLANY

◆ COMICS ◆

Blondie

YOU OKAY, HONEY?
OH, I'M HAVING A PROBLEM WITH THIS SURVEY
IT SAYS: RATE YOUR HUSBAND'S KISSING! BUT THE RATING ONLY GOES UP TO 10!
I'LL TAKE THE BLAME! I'VE SET THE BAR TOO HIGH
I SECOND THAT!

Hagar The Horrible

Beetle Bailey

Peanuts

IT'S THE RED BARON! HE'S ON MY TAIL!
HERE'S WHERE ALL MY MONTHS OF TRAINING WILL COME TO USE...
THE FIRST THING THEY TAUGHT US WAS TO SEEK COVER IN THE CLOUDS
IN TRAINING WE HAD BIGGER CLOUDS

Marvin

I'M DONE CLEARING OUT MY CUBE FOR THE NEW "BOY WONDER" REP
WHAT ABOUT THAT PILE OF REQUESTS THAT JUST CAME IN FROM OUR MOST DIFFICULT CLIENT?
I'M GOING TO LEAVE THOSE AS A LITTLE HOUSEWARMING PRESENT FOR THE BOY WONDER!

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

HEITC

BTAAE

CNORBO

ATRHWM

Let me show you how that works.
I got it. It's perfect. Let's ring it up.
Well, that didn't take long.
12
17
WHEN SHE SAW THAT THE FITNESS WATCH COULD TRACK HER PULSE, SHE BOUGHT IT ---

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app · Follow us on Facebook

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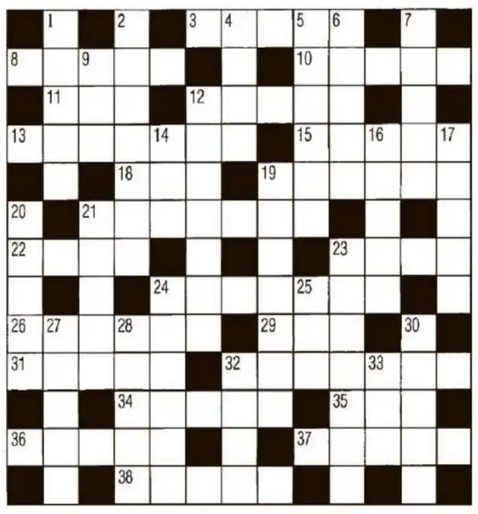
(Answers Tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: APART PERCH HIGHLY CRAYON
Answer: The problem with his ears was just wax buildup, which he was — HAPPY TO HEAR

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 12448



ACROSS
3 Explosive devices (5)
8 Of punishment (5)
10 Log boats (5)
11 Decompose (3)
12 Inhumane (5)
13 Corsairs (7)
15 Present age (5)
18 Put on (3)
19 Give to charity (6)
21 Male servant (7)
22 Legal successor (4)
23 Beseeches (4)
24 Iraqi capital (7)
26 Brutish person (6)
29 Trouble, afflict (3)
31 Boy's name (5)
32 Patella (7)
34 Nude (5)
35 In favour of (3)
36 Fiend (5)
37 Private teacher (5)
38 Coarse files (5)

DOWN
1 Grave danger (5)
2 Bullfighter (7)
4 Rowing blades (4)
5 Native of Brittany (6)
6 Hairdresser's shop (5)
7 Small Eurasian mammal (5)
9 And not (3)
12 Middle (7)
14 In addition (3)
16 Unfashionable (5)
17 Raising agent (5)
19 Expert (3,4)
20 Cut wool from (5)
21 Belong, conform (3,2)
23 Harmful, vindictive (7)
24 Fruit (6)
25 Cease living (3)
27 Fresh, new (5)
28 Landed estate (5)
30 Christmas hymn (5)
32 Brown seaweed (4)
33 Crib (3)

CRYPTIC

ACROSS
3 Diagram showing a good way to play the harp? (5)
8 Exasperated by a useless railway! (5)
10 With light on, looks silky (5)
11 Something only two can play (3)
12 Varsity men playing for Chelsea? (5)
13 Enough dollars to make a movie (7)
15 It has wings and flies (5)
18 To growl at one's sweetheart is the wrong thing to do (3)
19 Termed fashionable, perhaps? (6)
21 It's a top game (7)
22 Del's river? (4)
23 There's a novel one by Galsworthy (4)
24 Maybe lives with the French somewhere in Spain (7)
26 The couple got level (6)
29 To break an egg can be a sticky mess (3)
31 Their thorns can cause sores (5)
32 Demonstrator being theatrical? (7)
34 Does he turn his master out? (5)
35 To back us with a million takes money! (3)
36 Mined material? (5)
37 Only a fathead can keep baby quiet! (5)
38 Observe about half an inch of water (5)

DOWN
1 Released some profound ideas (5)
2 Bodybuilder in port, perhaps – a German one (7)
4 The ëlist' sailors are said to walk with? (4)
5 A professional can take a set quickly (6)
6 Quick to change hats with a Yankee (5)
7 Go ahead and commit a crime (5)
9 He joins us at golf (3)
12 Talked excitedly of how some burglars suffered! (7)
14 A brother far removed (3)
16 Algy, we hear, is pretty green (5)
17 Given the wrong grade, he raged wildly (5)
19 Handy trick, perhaps, though said to be trifling (7)
20 Maker of war? You bet! (5)
21 Those in the noble art of fisticuffs? (5)
23 Stops rushing and has a leisurely drink? (5,2)
24 A magic word to keep uncle in check (6)
25 Look on love as a game (3)
27 Possibly loves animals (5)
28 Big Ben! (5)
30 Ray's letter from Greece? (5)
32 Made news when stitched up? (4)
33 Dad keeps her quiet (3)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 2686

ACROSS: 1 Distant, 5 Reflect, 9 Fraught, 10 Chicago, 11 Climb, 12 Euphrates, 13 Tolerable, 15 Lucky, 16 Poppy, 18 Cut and run, 21 Boomerang, 24 Owing, 25 Inflame, 26 Console, 27 Harvest, 28 Oddment.

DOWN: 1 Deficit, 2 Spaniel, 3 Argy-bargy, 4 Title, 5 Recipient, 6 Friar, 7 Elastic, 8 Trotsky, 14 Bucharest, 15 Land of Nod, 16 Publish, 17 Proffer, 19 Rhizome, 20 Neglect, 22 Evade, 23 Gecko.

◆ SU-DO-KU-6944 ◆

5		4						3
	3				4			
6				3			1	
		7	1			8		
1		5		9		3		7
		9			2	4		
	9			5				8
			2				3	
8						7		6

hard

9	6	1	5	2	7	3	4	8
3	8	2	9	6	4	5	1	7
5	4	7	3	8	1	6	2	9
7	3	8	6	5	2	1	9	4
6	5	4	1	9	8	7	3	2
1	2	9	7	4	3	8	5	6
2	7	5	4	1	6	9	8	3
4	1	6	8	3	9	2	7	5
8	9	3	2	7	5	4	6	1

SOLUTION TO 6943

To solve the puzzle: To solve a su-do-ku puzzle, every digit from1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

SCRABBLE™

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U1 S1 T1 R1 T1 D2 E1 — Triple Word Score — RACK 1

O1 O1 R1 R1 G2 W4 N1 — Triple Word Score — RACK 2

U1 U1 R1 R1 T1 P3 E1 — Triple Word Score — RACK 3

I1 I1 E1 S1 P3 B3 C3 — Triple Word Score — RACK 4

PAR SCORE 140-150
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

C3 A1 L1 L1 E1 D2
P3 R1 O1 F4 I1 L1 E1
F4 A1 N1 O1 N1 S1
U1 N1 J8 U1 S1 T1

PAR SCORE 90-100

RACK 1 = 9
RACK 2 = 70
RACK 3 = 18
RACK 4 = 39
JUDD'S TOTAL 136

HITORI-3398

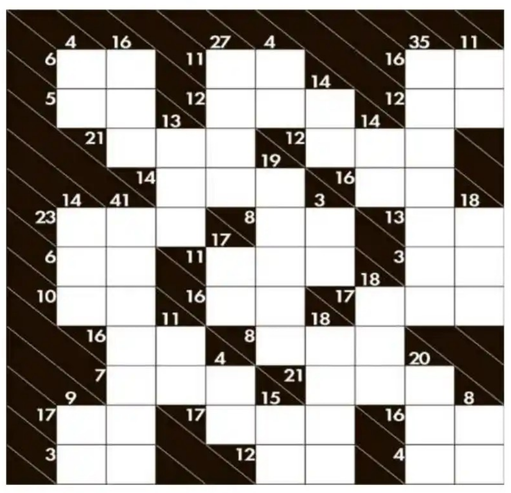
8	8	2	6	7	1	6	5
3	1	3	6	8	6	2	8
1	5	7	2	2	3	2	8
3	6	8	2	2	4	5	7
7	3	6	5	6	6	4	2
4	2	1	2	3	5	2	6
2	4	5	8	6	2	3	1
2	7	3	2	4	6	8	6

SOLUTION TO 3397

6	7	■	8	2	3	5	4
7	■	3	■	4	■	8	■
2	4	1	6	8	7	■	5
■	1	2	7	5	■	3	6
1	3	■	4	6	8	■	2
4	2	6	■	3	■	7	1
3	■	7	2	■	4	■	8
■	8	4	5	7	6	1	3

To solve the puzzle: Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

KAKURO- 3398



SOLUTION TO 3397

To solve the puzzle: Put a number from 1 through 9 in a cell. No zeros. A number in a cell separated by diagonal line tells the sum of numbers in consecutive cells at its right or downward. No number may appear more than once in consecutive cells.

SU DO KU X - 3961

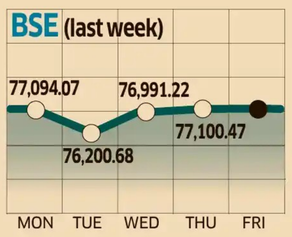
■		5						■
9	■	3	6	7			■	1
		■				■		6
	8		5		6		1	
	3			■				
	2		■	4	3			8
		■			5	■	8	4
	■			2			■	
■	1		4					■

SOLUTION TO 3960

4	2	1	7	6	3	8	9	5
3	6	8	5	1	9	7	2	4
5	7	9	4	8	2	6	1	3
6	9	3	1	5	7	4	8	2
8	4	5	2	3	6	1	7	9
7	1	2	9	4	8	5	3	6
9	5	4	3	7	1	2	6	8
2	8	7	6	9	4	3	5	1
1	3	6	8	2	5	9	4	7

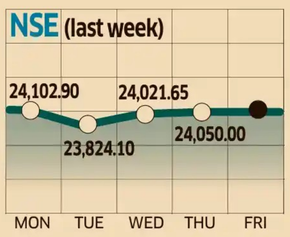
To solve the puzzle: The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

BSE (last week)



*Data as of June 26

NSE (last week)



*Markets were closed on Friday due to Muharram

TOP GAINERS		TOP LOSERS	
INDIGO	8.48%	ITATASTEEL	-5.13%
M&M	3.48%	BEL	-4.76%
ICICIBANK	3.05%	NTPC	-3.72%
MARUTI	2.60%	ETERNAL	-3.39%
KOTAKBANK	2.53%	ASIANPAINTS	-3.22%

TOP GAINERS		TOP LOSERS	
CIPLA	6.53%	HINDALCO IND	-5.62%
DR REDDY'S LAB	6.16%	ONGC	-5.34%
MAHI & MAHI	3.49%	TATA STEEL	-5.15%
ICICI BANK	3.04%	BEL	-4.61%
SHRIRAM FIN	2.98%	JSW STEEL	-4.40%

Sensex (52-week) ▼

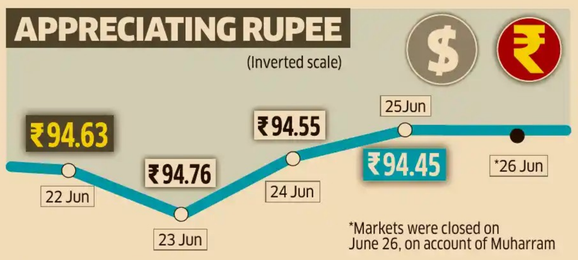
Jun 25, 2025: 82,755.51 | Jun 25, 2026: 77,100.47 | -6.83%

Nifty (52-week) ▼

Jun 25, 2025: 25,244.75 | Jun 25, 2026: 24,050.00 | -4.73%

10-year Bond yield 6.77%

APPRECIATING RUPEE



*Markets were closed on June 26, on account of Muharram

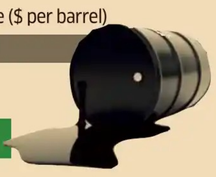
Exchange Rates*

Dollar	₹ 94.45	SGD	₹ 73.17
Pound	₹ 124.49	Yen (100 units)	₹ 58.38
Euro	₹ 107.36		

*Price at which banks sell

Crude Oil Rate ($ per barrel)

BRENT CRUDE
$72.60*
-3.84%
*Rate as of Jun 26



Bengaluru fuel pump price*

(Retail)

Petrol* ₹111.68 ₹0% ↔

Diesel* ₹99.56 ₹0% ↔

*Rates as of Jun 27 #Rate change compared with yesterday

Commodity watch

COFFEE

Category	Rate (Rs per 50 kg)*
Arabica Parchment	₹ 22600 – 23000
Arabica Cherry	₹ 12750 - 14250
Robusta Parchment	₹ 17800 – 18300
Robusta Cherry	₹ 9500 - 10300

*Rates as on Jun 24

Other Commodities

Silkworm cocoon (Rs per kg)*

Bivoltine (BV)	₹ 727
Cross Breed (CB)	₹ 638

*Average rates as on Jun 26

HCLTech-Sarvam deal signals AI-building push

Investment a strategic move towards direct participation in AI ecosystem

UMA KANNAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

Indian IT services firms have long partnered with US AI giants like OpenAI and Anthropic to deploy their models and upskill employees. Meanwhile, HCLTech's investment in homegrown Sarvam AI marks a pivot — Indian IT now aims to co-create the country's AI future, not just implement it.

Recently, HCLTech acquired a 10.5% stake in Sarvam AI for Rs 1,427 crore. The IT services firm said that by combining its enterprise transformation expertise, global client relationships, data and software IP, and engineering depth, it would accelerate Sarvam's goal of building an end-to-end sovereign AI ecosystem for India and beyond.

Industry analysts call the investment a strategic shift towards direct participation in the AI ecosystem. Ankur Mittal, Co-founder, Inflection Point Ventures, a startup investing platform, said HCLTech's investment is significant not because of its size, but because it signals how Indian enterprises are rethinking AI.

"For years, India has excelled at adopting global technology. The next decade, however, will belong to countries that build foundational capabilities of their own," Mittal said.

"Every major technology wave creates two opportunities — those who build the infrastructure and those who build businesses on top of it. The internet created cloud giants, but also companies like Amazon, Uber and Netflix. Smartphones gave us iOS and Android, but the real value came from the app ecosystem. AI will follow a similar path," he added.

While OpenAI and Anthropic define the frontier of foundation models globally, Mittal said India has a unique chance to build AI that understands its own languages, enterprises and regulatory landscape. Companies like Sarvam, he said, can bridge that gap — developing AI infrastructure deeply relevant to Indian businesses while creating globally competitive IP.

Analysts note that when firms like HCLTech invest in an Indian AI company, they bring domain expertise, real-world deployment opportunities and global credibility.

"Building foundational AI isn't a quick win. It takes patient capital, technical depth and the willingness to think in decades, not quarters. HCLTech's investment in Sarvam is more than a funding announcement — it's a statement that Indian industry is ready to back companies building the country's AI future, not just consuming someone else's," Mittal said.

At Infosys' 45th AGM, CFO Jayesh Sanghrajka was asked if Infosys would invest in AI companies like HCLTech did. He said Infosys has a disciplined approach to M&A, focused on tuck-in acquisitions that bridge capability gaps or accelerate growth through synergies. "This systematic approach has worked well for us. We have a strong balance sheet and clear cash allocation towards M&A, which puts us in a very advantageous position to make quick decisions," he said.

Govind Rammurthy, CEO and MD, eScan, said HCLTech's investment shows Indian IT services firms understand the need for sovereign AI. Sarvam's shift from fine-tuning Mistral models to training indigenous base models from scratch in India, he said, marks real technical progress.

The infrastructure matters. Data sovereignty matters. Government and regulated industries need alternatives to foreign-controlled systems.

But the investment, however large, doesn't solve the core problem, he warned. "Indians are, by nature, risk-averse and won't adopt emerging solutions. They will happily pay for proven platforms like ChatGPT or Claude because trust is established and risk is eliminated. A new Indian AI player, regardless of technical capability, starts with zero trust and maximum perceived risk."

Sarvam will face a brutal reality, Rammurthy said. "They can build exceptional models for Indian languages and use cases, but adoption requires overcoming the risk-aversion barrier. HCLTech's investment provides infrastructure and enterprise relationships. But it doesn't change the fundamental dynamic: customers must be willing to take risk on something new. That remains the unsolved problem," he said.

Praveen Joshi, MD and founding member of RSK Business Solutions, said AI is becoming a strategic driver of innovation, productivity, and economic growth, making it crucial for India to support homegrown AI firms that address local needs. What makes this development notable, he said, is the focus on building sovereign and multilingual AI capabilities.

"India's diversity presents opportunities that global models alone can't address. Organisations need solutions that understand local languages, contexts, and regulatory environments while maintaining high security and performance." Investments like these, Joshi added, do more than provide capital. They enable collaboration, accelerate R&D, strengthen domestic IP, and build a robust innovation ecosystem. They also signal to the market that Indian AI firms can compete globally.

HCLTech CEO and MD C Vijayakumar said their investment in Sarvam marks a significant step toward building India's trusted and globally-competitive AI ecosystem.

"By bringing together Sarvam's research in AI models with HCLTech's global presence, we are creating a differentiated full-stack AI platform for enterprises and governments, strengthening our ability to deliver secure, scalable, and responsible AI solutions," he added.

In the last few months, Sarvam has released foundational models, all trained from scratch in India. Its products are scaling rapidly, and its conversational platform now handles over 2 million interactions a day.

India's Sovereign AI Platform

Sarvam raises $234 mn in first close of $300 mn Series B at $1.5 bn valuation

HCLTech leads the round as strategic investor with $150 mn investment

Sarvam's conversational platform now handles over 2 mn interactions a day

Its models are being adopted by developers served on its inference platform in India, **which processes 10 mn API calls daily**, with usage tripling in the last 3 months

Sarvam AI emerges as the first homegrown LLM developer to enter the Hurun list, ranking 353 **with a valuation of Rs 14,220 crore**

"We are clear that research-led innovation to create AI that works at India's scale is a very large opportunity. That means models that understand our voices, read our documents, and serve intelligence at a cost every enterprise and government can afford. Building on this template, we are innovating on a full-stack offering for enterprises to own and operate their own sovereign AI."
PRATYUSH KUMAR, Co-founder, Sarvam

VOICE TECH

Startup recently raised $10 million in Series B funding led by Aavishkaar Capital

Gnani.ai scales up voice AI strategy

UMA KANNAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

When Ganesh Gopalan and Ananth Nagaraj co-founded voice-first agentic AI company Gnani.ai in Bengaluru in 2016, they ran into the same hurdles that tripped most DeepTech startups in India: scarce funding and skeptical investors. The two were colleagues at US semiconductor firm Texas Instruments (TI), when they decided to build something on their own.

The early days were bare-bones. "We didn't have a place to work. Only the two of us were there. One of our former TI colleagues had an office in Rajajinagar Industrial Town and we spent some time there. Then we hired our first employee, fresh out of college in Bengaluru," said Gopalan, Co-founder and CEO.

His DeepTech journey began at TI, where he saw the power of IP-driven products. It was also when Alexa launched, and voice AI was beginning to emerge.

"Many of our colleagues at TI were poached by Alexa. We knew this was going to transform the world. We did more research and realised that voice is the most natural form of communication," Gopalan said. That conviction led the founders to bet on voice AI.

The startup grew steadily after signing its first customers. "Today, we have over 200 customers around the world," Gopalan said. Gnani's first customer was TVS Credit, while the team also worked on defence projects with DRDO.

"We owe a lot to these customers who believed in us when we were nothing. Many customers say, 'Give me 10 references before we start working with you', but these early customers were willing to take a bet on a company they had not heard of. The real heroes in many such stories are these customers," Gopalan recalled from his office on RV Road, Basavanagudi.

In 2020, the company launched an integrated speech recognition-based solution for the Indian defence establishment. The end-to-end voice translation system uses Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR), machine translation and speech-to-text to convert Mandarin to English.

Today, Gnani.ai serves over 200 enterprise clients across BFSI, insurance, telecom, automotive and government. Its voice AI platform processes more than 30 million voice interactions daily in over 12 languages. The startup recently raised $10 million in Series B funding led by Aavishkaar Capital, with participation from existing investor Info Edge Ventures.

In February, Gnani.ai launched Vachana TTS, a foundational text-to-speech model delivering human-quality speech synthesis with zero-shot voice cloning across 12 Indic languages. Vachana TTS is the second model released under Inya VoiceOS as part of the India AI Mission. Around the same time, the company also launched a voice-to-voice large language model (LLM).

What excites Gopalan now is the shift from GenAI to agentic workforce automation, where AI agents don't just answer queries but own outcomes.

STARTUP STARS

"The current models convert voice to text, extract meaning from that text, and then convert it back to voice. The problem with this traditional approach is that when you convert speech to text, the entire emotion is lost. Text carries some emotion in the words, but the tone, the way we speak, is completely lost. That's what we're building with voice-to-voice models," he explained.

For Gopalan, emotion will define the next generation of voice AI. Take an insurance claim handled by an automated system. "You need an agent that understands the caller's emotions. Maybe they've lost a loved one. You can't use a standard AI agent that talks without emotion. We need agents that actually understand emotions and respond with the right tone. For any human-machine communication, emotions are going to be important," he said.

Today, voice AI agents handle simpler use cases such as customer service. Tomorrow, Gopalan expects them to power sales and retail conversations, including kiosks that can understand customer emotions. "Everything becomes important. At some point, you'll have humanoids. So, emotions are going to be essential," he said.

Translation is another area with significant potential. The company recently launched Prisma v2.5, its latest speech-to-text model, trained on 14 million hours of proprietary Indic speech.

QUICK FACTS

Founded in: **2016**

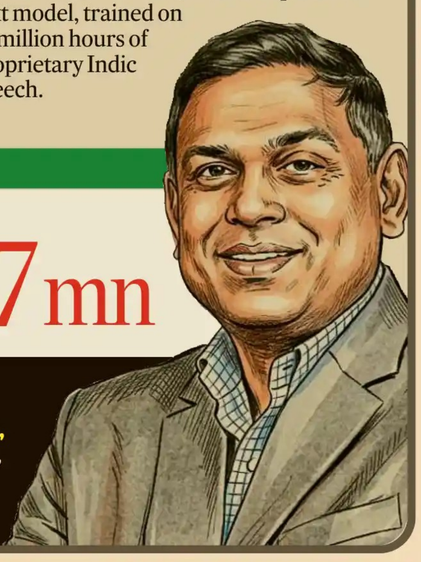
Areas: Voice-first agentic AI company

Startup processes **30 mn+** voice interactions daily

Gnani AI's frontier models are trained on 14 million hours of telephonic audio across 40+ languages

Funding: $17.7 mn

Co-founders: **Ganesh Gopalan, Ananth Nagaraj, and Bharath Shankar**



Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles to accelerate EV push with 4 new models

NEW DELHI, PTI

With India's electric vehicle (EV) adoption crossing the 'early adopters' phase, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles (PV) is turning to majority of customers to drive EV adoption with four new products and over ten refreshes lined up for launch by FY31 to sustain its leadership position.

Early Adopters are those consumers who adopt a new idea or technology to gain a competitive edge.

The company is preparing for the next phase of growth in its electric vehicles segment, eyeing over 30% EV penetration by FY31, according to an investor presentation.

"Currently, EVs are being considered by the early majority; we will enhance products to drive adoption among early and late majority customers," the company said.

Early majority consumers are those who need to see successful case studies before buying, while late majority consumers are skeptical individuals who adopt only after the average person has adopted a new idea or technology.

According to the company, early adopters account for 13.5% of the EV market, while the early majority and late majority make up 34% each, and laggards constitute 16%. Innovators are a minority at 2.5%.

Innovators are risk-takers who love being the very first to try new things, while laggards are traditionalists who resist change and are the last to adopt.

On the company's product plans to drive future growth, it said, "By FY31, we will have a portfolio of 10 EV nameplates. We have a sustained launch cadence for the next phase of growth to strengthen our portfolio comprehensively."

Its current nameplates are Xpres-T, Curvv.ev, Harrier.ev, Nexon.ev, Punch.ev and Tiago.ev.

Upcoming products include Sierra.ev, one product based on its Avinya concept and two other models.

Tata Motors PV said it is increasing the range of its EVs by two to three times and faster charging by three times, while increasing the energy density of batteries by 20-23%.

CREATIVE INTELLIGENCE

AI reshapes content economics with faster production, higher output

TEJASWINI S
BENGALURU, DHNS

Artificial intelligence (AI) is altering content economics across India's media and entertainment industry, driving faster production, higher output, improved localisation and efficient workflows, rather than direct cost cuts. Pocket FM doubled annual recurring revenue (ARR) to $400 million in Q4 FY26 and turned free cash flow-positive, with EBITDA at nearly 5%, while scaling creator output to over 80,000 hours a month.

Global EdTech company Great Learning cut content timelines from weeks to days, and TukTuki now sustains nearly 25 releases a month using AI. Companies say the biggest gains are in planning, editing and execution, while storytelling remains human-led.

Media companies are moving AI from experimentation to production. Teams across streaming, creator platforms and digital media, including AI-led initiatives emerging across large platforms such as JioHotstar, which has started hiring for more than 75 AI-focused roles, are exploring how AI can support content generation, recommendation, audience engagement and monetisation, while improving speed and reducing execution costs.

Companies already deploying AI say the biggest gains are emerging in repeatable and operational functions rather than in original storytelling.

For Studio Blo, a Mumbai-based AI-native filmmaking lab, AI has changed how creative teams approach execution and expanded the range of production models available to filmmakers.

"Whatever we end up doing is generated using AI as a replacement for the traditional camera. A filmmaker might want to pre-visualise shots or scenes for an upcoming film, and AI helps either visualise what is going to happen or replace logistically complex shots," says Dipankar Mukherjee, Co-Founder & CEO, Studio Blo.

Speed over savings

Mukherjee says Studio Blo is also executing projects entirely through AI-generated workflows without using traditional cameras, including ad films, music videos, corporate films and feature films intended for theatrical release.

"AI has a massive impact on fast-tracking projects. If I have an idea and want to quickly see what it looks like, there is nothing better than AI to visualise that, because there are no logistical hurdles. I don't need to book equipment or locations, or obtain permissions. Therefore, it ramps up the speed of doing projects," he adds, cautioning against assuming that AI automatically makes production cheap.

"There is a misconception at the moment that AI is very cheap. We have grown from a team of six people two years ago, to 80 across three studios in Mumbai. What AI primarily does is reduce the cost of taking risks, whether for the creator or the distributor. You can take bets on very big scripts and very lavish worlds without spending as much money doing that. You can fail faster and take creative risks."

Linking AI to accelerated expansion across new business lines, he mentions, "We are now getting into digital talent management with celebrity clones, into live performances with AI, the animation vertical and the edutainment vertical. In a traditional format, each of these would have taken a decade to build."

Quality the real test

Outside entertainment, companies creating educational content are also reporting measurable outcomes.

Pavankumar Gurazada, Associate Director (Academics) at Great Learning, says AI is now being used across content creation, personalisation and deployment, rather than replacing instructional roles.

He adds that faster turnaround has also helped the company respond to a wider range of learner needs more quickly, contributing to growth in ARR, but clarifies that efficiency gains alone do not guarantee success.

While learner ratings for AI-assisted content remains in the 4.6-4.7 range, Gurazada says maintaining those scores requires significant investment in refinement. "The challenge is not generating content quickly. You may get revenue upfront, but recurring revenue only happens if the quality remains high," he explains.

For content companies operating at scale, AI is becoming less about replacing people and more about improving production economics.

TukTuki deliberately avoids synthetic actors and instead uses AI to optimise production. "Our core strategy is not to use AI to generate synthetic characters or replace human actors. Instead, we use it to optimise the math of production. AI is just a co-pilot of human creativity," says Anshita Kulshrestha, Founder and CEO of TukTuki.

Independent filmmaker and content strategist Anshuman Alamuru says the shift is becoming visible even among smaller creative teams. "What used to take weeks, whether crafting content strategy or rendering complex computer-generated imagery, we now accomplish in days."

Referring to AI's impact on production workflows, Alamuru states: "Production cost can be reduced by as much as 90%."

For media companies, AI is no longer just about cutting production costs. It is helping creators and studios reduce the cost of experimentation, speed up execution, increase content output and bring ideas to market faster.

When the story stops being enough

For a single fortnight in June, the market handed down two verdicts which looked like opposites and turned out to be the same judgment arriving from different directions. On the 12th, Space Exploration Technologies (SpaceX) completed the largest stock market listing in history, opening on the Nasdaq at $150, closing its first day almost a fifth higher, and briefly surpassing both Amazon and Microsoft in market value. Seven trading sessions later, on the 19th, Accenture trimmed a single percentage point from the top of its annual revenue guidance, and by the next morning in Mumbai the Nifty IT index had cratered close to 6% to its lowest level since 2023, dragging Infosys and Tata Consultancy to multi-year lows as roughly Rs 1.35 lakh crore of market value disappeared in one session.

The easy reading is a story of winners and losers, artificial intelligence which creates value rewarded and the artificial intelligence which destroys jobs punished. The market was not nearly so kind to its supposed winner and within days of touching an intraday high above $225, a level worth about two thirds more than its offer price, the same SpaceX stock surrendered the better part of a third of its value, falling more than 16% in a single session and erasing most of its post-listing rally until it traded only modestly above the price at which it had been sold.

The firm still runs at a loss, and the sober valuations placed on it sit well below the figure the market briefly assigned, which is the whole point, because enthusiasm had outrun evidence, and investors had shifted from celebrating possibility to scrutinising valuation, profitability, and execution. A company larger than Amazon for a single afternoon was, a week later, considerably smaller. The lesson is not a turn against artificial intelligence but a colder demand, since the market stopped paying for the promise of it and began asking, of everyone, where the actual cash flows were.

The question should trouble Bengaluru, because the Indian technology services industry, an export engine now approaching $300 billion in annual revenue, was built almost entirely on a model which answered it the same way for three decades, by billing clients for human effort and growing its headcount in step with its revenue. Artificial intelligence, on the other hand, severs precisely this link, allowing the same work to be delivered with steadily fewer people, and so the market is no longer repricing a weak quarter but reassessing whether the business can grow at all in the form the industry has always known.

ANUBHAV SRIVASTAVA
MANAGING PARTNER, ARYZEN CAPITAL ADVISORS

The evidence sits in the hiring numbers rather than in any forecast, because the five largest Indian software firms cut their combined headcount by around 6,000-8,000 in the financial year just ended after adding more than 12,000 the year before, fresher intake has been slashed from the volumes which once absorbed engineering graduates by the hundred thousand, industry recruiters estimate entry-level hiring demand has fallen by roughly a fifth as routine work is automated, and overall workforce growth across the sector has slowed to barely 2%.

None of this settles the harder question, which is whether the present moment is a cyclical pause in client spending (of the kind the industry has weathered many times before, from the dotcom bust to the financial crisis to the pandemic) or the early stage of a structural repricing no amount of patience will reverse, and the honest answer is the data does not yet allow a confident choice between the two.

What the June fortnight established, by humbling the most celebrated débutante, and the most established incumbents in the same breath, is a single uncomfortable distinction, because the market has begun to separate participating in artificial intelligence from profiting from it, and the separation leaves the Indian majors in the harder half of the problem.

The newly listed creator must eventually prove it can turn its ambitions into earnings, while the software houses must prove a business built on selling human hours can survive the very tool which now performs them. For the long-term investor watching familiar names trade at valuations last seen several years ago, this is less an invitation to act than a reminder of how the cheapest moments in a market are seldom cheap without reason, and the reason, this time, is a question the industry has not yet answered.

Nine years of GST: A look back and way forward

The GST regime a good example of cooperative federalism

PRABHAKAR K S

At midnight nine years ago, the Indian Parliament's Central Hall witnessed the nationwide launch of a new Indirect Tax regime, the Goods and Services Tax (GST). The deficiencies of the old tax system, the cascading effect, multiple state and Central levies, and the absence of an integrated tax administration had led to the introduction of the 'One Nation, One Tax, One Market' regime. In another two days, the GST regime will enter its tenth year. Now the question is: Whether the GST succeeded? To what extent? Were all the promises delivered? Are end-consumers benefitting? What are the issues that still haunt the economy? And what is the way forward?

More formalised economy

The implementation of GST has brought several advantages to the economy. A fully-integrated national market from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, standard tax rates, prevention of the cascading effect, checkpost-free state borders, reduced incentives for tax evasion, harmonised rules and procedures, among others. As a result, currently, there are 1.65 crore taxpayers registered under the GST, compared to 67.80 lakh unique registrations under the old VAT and service tax regimes. Mandatory registration based on an annual turnover, i.e., Rs 40 lakh for goods and Rs 20 lakh for services, to make inter-state supplies, and to claim input tax credit, drawing most of the business into the GST's ambit. To avail those benefits, the businesses with less than the prescribed turnover limits are also getting registered under the GST voluntarily. Due to the advent of the internet and technology, a formally-registered business can be found even in rural areas.

Fine example of cooperative federalism

The GST regime is a good example of cooperative federalism. Our successful consumption-based tax is a role model for other developing economies. Unlike earlier, both the Centre and the states have concurrent power on levying tax on goods and services. It has effectively disposed of the compartmentalisation of taxing powers at different levels: local, state, and Centre. The GST Council, an apex policy-making body, brings the Union Finance Minister and all the states' finance or tax heads together. So far, a total of 56 GST Council meetings have been held periodically at different locations. All its decisions arrived at consensus, except in one instance, taxation on lotteries, obtained through voting in the 38th GST Council meeting held in December 2019.

Record-breaking revenue buoyancy

Since inception, the gross GST collections have been steadily increasing month-after-month, year-after-year, except in pandemic-hit years. For July 2017, the first month's taxes collected in August 2017 were about Rs 94,603 crore. Now, the average monthly gross GST collection stands anywhere between Rs 1.80 lakh crore and Rs 1.85 lakh crore. The highest monthly gross GST collection at Rs 2.43 lakh crore was recorded in April 2026. Financial year-wise, the 2025-26's total gross GST collection at Rs 22.27 lakh crore recorded as the highest-ever gross GST collections.

2025's GST rate rationalisation

The GST Council, in its last meeting held on September 3, 2025, in New Delhi, has recommended the much-delayed overhaul of GST rates and slabs. GST rates on daily essentials were reduced considerably. Most of the goods are now being taxed either at 5% or 18% brackets. GST slabs also reduced from the initial five slabs to three slabs — merit 5%, standard 18%, and luxury and de-merit 40%, for a select few items, effective from September 22, 2025, midnight.

An informal observation on consumer behaviour between April 2025 and June 2026 reveals a positive shift. The consumption of daily used food items has witnessed a strong growth during the last nine months, compared to April-August 2025. Significant reduction in taxes, a contributory factor in making them more affordable, resulted in higher sales growth. For instance, ultra-high temperature milk, paneer — pre-packaged and labelled, pizza bread, and chapati, are listed under '0' or 'Nil' tax brackets. Condensed milk, butter and other fats, cheese, and dry fruits were moved from 12% to 5% tax bracket.

In the automobile industry, the tax rates were reduced from 28% to 18% on two-wheelers (>350cc) and small cars (>1200 cc for petrol/1500 cc for diesel). The significant reduction in tax rates and the festive season's special discount have made them more affordable, benefited entry-level commuters and boosted sales. The tax reduction has reduced prices of two-wheelers — Honda Activa, Hero Splendor, and Bajaj Pulsar — between Rs 5,000 and Rs 24,000. October 2025 alone recorded a retail sale of 31.50 lakh units, an unprecedented 52% growth YoY. Similarly, passenger vehicles, including small car sales, during October 2025, recorded an all-time high sales of 5.57 lakh units, again an unprecedented 40.50% growth YoY.

Tech-backed indirect-tax regime

The GST regime is fully-supported by tech-backed administration, from registration to regular compliance. It has minimised the efforts for taxpayers, zero manual intervention and provided an efficient system at their disposal for tax officers. Interestingly, the commercial banks, having confidence in the system, are extending crucial overdraft facilities and working capital loans from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 crore purely based on GST invoices/returns.

Non-inclusion of certain goods

While implementing the GST, the Centre has kept liquor, natural gas, petroleum products, and electricity from GST purview. Due to the absence of states' consent, their inclusion was not as easy as thought. The reason could be that the effective sales tax on petroleum products varies from state to state, where, in the case of Maharashtra, it is 40%, and in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, it is 6%. Petroleum products and liquor alone are used to generate approximate 40% of the total indirect taxes under the erstwhile VAT regime, hence, the states' apprehension is that if included, it will impact their fiscal independence further.

There are undelivered promises, a partially-resolved inverted duty structure, seamless input tax credit in a true sense, and an efficient dispute resolution that are still haunting the system. It is reported that the upcoming GST Council meeting is likely to be held in mid-July 2026 in Kolkata, and to address these issues on priority.

The way forward

Given India's geographic vastness, different business models, political compulsions, and complexities in getting everybody on board are not as easy as said to be. No doubt, a major challenge that India has successfully embraced. As we set the tone for an ambitious Viksit Bharat by 2047, all those concerned are expected to pull up their socks and move towards collective growth.

(The writer is Founder & CEO, Shree Tax Chambers)

9 Years of GST

GST was launched by the then President **Pranab Mukherjee** at the central hall of the old Parliament building at the stroke of midnight on July 1, 2017

- GST rates in India are determined by the GST Council, which includes representatives from the Union, State and Union Territory governments
- GST was introduced as a four-tier structure of **5, 12, 18** and **28%**
- The average monthly collection stood at **Rs 1.85 lakh crore** in FY26, up from Rs 1.84 lakh crore in FY25
- The registered taxpayer base has expanded from 66.5 lakh at launch, to about **1.6 crore** in 2026, reflecting increased formalisation of the economy
- A cess was levied over and above the **28%** rate for luxury, sin and demerit goods
- A separate 40% slab was kept only for luxury and demerit goods
- GST replaced a complex system of 17 Central and state taxes, and **13 cesses,** with a unified indirect tax framework
- Starting September 22, 2025, a next-gen GST, with a two-tier structure was launched by placing most goods and services into two slabs – **5%** for essential items and **18%** for standard goods and services

FIVE FTAs SINCE 2021

Board of Trade meet on July 3 to discuss ways to boost exports

NEW DELHI, PTI

The Board of Trade (BoT), chaired by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, is scheduled to meet on July 3 to leverage benefits from recent trade pacts and to discuss strategies for accelerating the country's exports, an official said.

The BoT includes participants from various states, Union Territories, and senior officials from the public and private sectors.

In the meeting, representatives of export promotion councils, along with other participants, will present their views on the export sector.

"The BoT is meeting on July 3 here," the official said. The last meeting of the board was held on November 25, 2025.

The meeting is important as India has implemented FTAs since 2021 with Mauritius, Australia, the UAE, Oman, and the four-nation European EFTA bloc. It has also signed a pact with the UK, which will come into force on July 15.

The trade pact with the 27-nation EU is expected to be signed by the end of this year and may come into force next year.

The meeting is also important as India is looking to take the country's merchandise exports to $1 trillion in 2026-27. It was $863 billion in 2025-26.

Piyush Goyal

Earlier this month, the government nominated 29 non-official members, including SBI Chairman CS Setty, Apple India MD Virat Bhatia, and Mahindra & Mahindra MD Anish Shah, to the Board.

In 2019, the government merged the Council of Trade Development and Promotion with the Board of Trade to bring greater coherence in the consultation process with all stakeholders for promoting exports and imports. The BoT provides an opportunity to discuss and consult with trade and industry leaders as they advise the government on policy measures for foreign trade policy to achieve the objective of boosting India's trade.

It also provides a platform for state governments and Union territories to articulate their perspective on trade policy, and also for the central government to apprise them about international developments affecting India's trade potential and opportunities.

India's exports climbed to a six-month high of 18% to $45.2 billion in May, while the trade deficit widened to $28.21 billion. During April-May 2026-27, exports rose 16.09% to $88.91 billion, while imports jumped 15.14% to $145.35 billion. The trade deficit stood at $56.44 billion during the period.

The Commerce Ministry has called a meeting of stakeholders on June 30 to discuss issues related to SEZs, an official said.

The meeting will focus on issues related to the harmonisation of export promotion schemes and SEZ reforms, the official said.

The issues which are expected to figure in the deliberations include INR payment for SEZS to domestic tariff area (DTA) services; job work by units of these zones for DTA without linkage to exports, import substitution, reforms in the free trade warehousing zones, and further promoting ease of doing business in these enclaves.

The government has set up a 17-member committee to suggest larger reforms in the policy for these zones.

It is undertaking a background study focused on the harmonisation of various prevalent export promotion schemes, including SEZs, export-oriented units (EoUs), MOOWR (Manufacturing and Other Operations in Warehouse), Advance Authorisation (AA), EPCG (Export Promotion for Capital Goods), and Duty Free Import Authorisation (DFIA).

WEEK AHEAD

Benchmark indices likely to remain steady

Progress on geopolitical and trade-related fronts could provide support

SIDDHARTHA KHEMKA

Indian equities are expected to maintain a positive bias this week, with benchmark indices likely to remain largely steady while broader markets continue to witness stock-specific momentum. Sentiment is being supported by easing favourable global cues and a sharp correction in crude oil prices. Additionally, the southwest monsoon has resumed its advance across the country, improving sentiment. Optimism surrounding the near-finalisation of the India-US interim trade agreement, along with continued progress in US-Iran negotiations, has further strengthened investor confidence. Key data releases this week include India's Manufacturing PMI and Industrial Production data for May, along with the US Manufacturing Index.

KEY EVENTS
- India's Manufacturing PMI
- IIP data for May
- US Manufacturing Index

In a truncated last week, domestic equity markets remained range-bound with Nifty 50 ending flat at 24,056. The Nifty Midcap 100 declined 1% and the Nifty Smallcap 100 closed largely unchanged. Sectorally, performance was mixed. Nifty Pharma (+3%) emerged as the standout gainer, supported by its defensive appeal, positive regulatory developments, and continued optimism around export opportunities, while Nifty Auto (+1%) also ended higher, aided by resilient demand trends and expectations of improved volumes on the back of falling crude prices. On the downside, Nifty IT (-4%) was the week's worst performer, weighed down by weak global technology sentiment and concerns around discretionary spending following cautious commentary from global IT majors.

A significant easing in macro risks has emerged over recent weeks. Brent crude has fallen nearly 40% from its wartime peak to below $74 per barrel, extending losses for a fourth consecutive session as the resumption of tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz improved the global supply outlook. The decline in crude has provided meaningful relief to India's macroeconomic position, supporting the rupee, which has strengthened to around 94.5 against the US dollar from its record low of 96.84. Market volatility has also moderated, with India VIX declining to 13.05, reflecting a sharp reduction in investor anxiety.

On the policy front, the government expects credit demand of nearly Rs 2 lakh crore under ECLGS 5.0, aimed at supporting businesses facing disruptions from geopolitical uncertainties and supply-chain challenges. While India's fiscal deficit is expected to widen modestly to 4.6% of GDP in FY27 due to fuel tax reductions and higher fertiliser subsidies, the government is unlikely to resort to additional bond issuance, which remains supportive for fixed-income markets. Consequently, the 10-year government bond yield is expected to remain in a comfortable 6.8–7.2% range.

The banking sector remains one of the strongest domestic themes. System credit growth accelerated to 17.7% YoY as of May-end, supported by broad-based demand across retail, corporate and MSME segments. Public sector banks have continued to gain market share, while RBI measures aimed at attracting FCNR(B) inflows are expected to ease liquidity pressures and support credit expansion. With improving liquidity conditions, easing yields and a stronger macro backdrop, the sector remains well placed for healthy earnings growth over the medium term.

Sectorally, pharmaceuticals, hospitality and textiles stand out. Pharma sentiment has improved following reports that the US FDA has approached Indian manufacturers to help address shortages of critical oncology drugs, creating potential opportunities for domestic exporters. The hospitality sector remains supported by strong occupancy trends, improving room rates and favourable demand-supply dynamics, while textiles are benefiting from a gradual recovery in global demand, supply-chain diversification and policy support through FTAs and manufacturing incentive schemes.

Crude sensitive sectors such as oil marketing companies and aviation are also likely to remain in focus as lower crude prices improve margin outlooks and reduce input cost pressures. Meanwhile, precious metals have come under pressure amid easing geopolitical concerns, with gold and silver witnessing their sharpest quarterly corrections in several years.

Going forward, investors will closely monitor crude oil prices, monsoon progress, developments in US-Iran negotiations and the finalisation of the India-US trade agreement. Continued progress on geopolitical and trade-related fronts, coupled with stable energy prices and sustained domestic liquidity, could provide further support to Indian equities in the near term.

(The writer is Head of Research, Wealth Management, MOFSL)

TOP PICKS

The data is sourced from Motilal Oswal Financial Services Limited

Gokaldas Exports (ID: GOKEX)	Upside +29%**	Last close ₹859	BUY, Target: ₹1,110*
Reliance (ID: RELIANCE)	Upside +26%**	Last close ₹1,318	BUY, Target: ₹1,655*
Delhivery (ID: DELHIVERY)	Upside +25%**	Last close ₹465	BUY, Target: ₹580*
Medanta (ID: MEDANTA)	Upside +13%**	Last close ₹1,318	BUY, Target: ₹1,490*
Groww (ID: GROWW)	Upside +18%**	Last close ₹200	BUY, Target: ₹235*

* Target price has been calculated on the basis of fundamentals ** Upside refers to more value stock is expected to generate than its current price

More than 1,300 excess deaths in Europe heatwave: WHO

Countries announce rising tolls amid health services warning of saturation

GENEVA, AFP

The World Health Organization said on Sunday that over 1,300 excess deaths had been recorded in Europe since June 21 in connection with the record-breaking heatwave roasting much of the continent.

Tens of millions have been braving a weekend of extreme temperatures in Europe as a deadly heatwave moves eastwards, with some countries announcing rising death tolls and health services warning of saturation.

On Sunday morning, French health officials said there had been around 1,000 more deaths than expected in that country just since Wednesday.

And across Europe, "more than 1,300 excess deaths have been recorded since 21 June linked to high temperatures in Europe", WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on X.

People help an elderly woman on a scooter fill her water bottles from a tanker providing free water, amid a heatwave at Castle Square in Warsaw, Poland, on Sunday. REUTERS

"Heat stress is often called the 'silent killer' - and European homes, workplaces and schools were not built for these temperatures," he said.

At least 191 million people are forecast to endure temperatures of at least 35C on Sunday in Europe, with the heat particularly intense in Germany, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, according to AFP estimates.

A total of 381 million people in Europe, excluding Turkey, will see temperatures surpass 30C, according to analysis based on forecasts from the German Meteorological Service and 2025 population projections from the Joint Research Centre collated by Austrian NGO Klimadashboard.

Millions of people across the continent are currently "living under extreme heat, hundreds have died, schools are shut, grids are buckling", Tedros warned.

"Driven by climate change and global warming, the phenomenon of the 'once-in-a-generation' heatwave is now occurring nearly annual," he said, pointing out that "Europe is the fastest-warming continent on Earth, heating at twice the global average".

The WHO chief said the United Nations health agency was "working with its Member States and partners to address the health threats posed by extreme heat through focusing on preparedness, prevention and stronger health system responses".

He called on European countries to "implement heat health action plans", as part of a push to safeguard health in the face of climate change.

Putin admits fuel shortage; task force formed

REUTERS

President Vladimir Putin acknowledged on Sunday that fuel supply problems had created shortages in Russian regions and a task force was working on ensuring sufficient quantities were provided throughout the country.

Putin, addressing a meeting of senior officials on fuel supply and distribution, said Russia had to minimize the effects of Ukrainian drone strikes on oil installations linked to the shortages.

He called for measures to ensure supplies for the farm sector and said a ban on diesel exports was under consideration.

"You are well aware that problems for drivers and for businesses persist," Putin told the meeting, according to accounts published by Russian news agencies. "Unfortunately, there are still queues at gas stations too."

He added: "We have to reduce to a minimum the impact of terrorist attacks on our civilian targets and infrastructure."

Ukraine has stepped up medium and long-range attacks on industrial targets in Russia and Russian-controlled territories inside Ukraine, focusing mainly on the oil sector.

Putin said gasoline reserves were being used and now stood at 1.7 million metric tons and that July production levels should exceed those recorded in June. He said a ban on diesel exports, under discussion for some time, was being considered. "The need to introduce a complete ban on the export of diesel fuel is being considered," he told participants.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak had earlier said there was no need for Russia to ban diesel exports, Interfax news agency reported.

A task force on fuel supplies was working round the clock, Putin said, adding the situation required "systemic measures that match the scale of current challenges" to increase supply and keep prices at a reasonable level.

"We need to make every effort to ensure that all seasonal fuel supply schedules are maintained for agro-industrial enterprises, because the harvest depends on it," Putin said.

Trump wants Syria to fight Hezbollah, unsettling Israel

Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa says he has no interest in doing so

BEIRUT, AP

As the White House has soured on Israel's war with Hezbollah in Lebanon, US President Donald Trump has shocked many in the region by pushing an alternative: Let Syria fight the Iran-backed militant group instead.

He has suggested that the battle-hardened and Islamist-led insurgents who overthrew Syria's autocratic President Bashar Assad a year and a half ago and formed a new government would do a better job of rooting out Hezbollah than the Israeli army.

Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa has said he has no interest in doing so, and has asserted that Trump's comments were misconstrued. But Trump has doubled down on the idea.

Although it remains unclear how serious the White House is about the proposal, the prospect of a Syrian invasion has raised alarms in Lebanon - and also in Israel, which regards al-Sharaa's Islamist-led government with suspicion and has seized control of a strip of southern Syria since he took power.

A piece of metal lies at Al-Bass Roman ruins, a Unesco World Heritage site hit by an Israeli airstrike in Tyre, southern Lebanon. REUTERS

Syria has also become the site of rising tensions between Israel and Turkiye - a main backer of al-Sharaa's government - with each seeking to limit the other's influence in the neighbouring country.

Top Israeli security officials convened a meeting on the subject on Wednesday, according to an official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media.

On the sidelines of the G7 summit earlier this month, Trump complained that Israel's war with Hezbollah is dragging on too long and "too many people are being killed."

More than 4,000 people have been killed by Israeli strikes in Lebanon since Hezbollah joined the wider Iran war with a March 2 attack on Israel.

Israel strikes south Lebanon despite deal to end hostilities

BEIRUT, AFP: Israel renewed its strikes on Lebanon on Sunday, Lebanese state media reported, two days after a deal was signed by the two countries, which a Hezbollah lawmaker warned would lead to "internal conflict".

The strikes come a day after one person was killed in an Israeli strike on the south, according to Lebanon's health ministry, with the Israeli military saying it targeted Hezbollah members near its self-proclaimed "security zone", which reaches 10 kilometres into Lebanon.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported several strikes on Sunday.

The Israeli army said a soldier "fell in combat" in southern Lebanon.

In a later statement, Israeli military chief Eyal Zamir approved plans for "continued operations in the security zone".

WORLD AT A GLANCE

Rescue team members search for casualties among rubble after earthquakes hit the country, in Tanaguarena neighbourhood, La Guaira, Venezuela, on Sunday. REUTERS

Rescue race as Venezuela death toll mounts to 1,450

▸ Rescue crews with sniffer dogs raced Sunday to pull survivors from the rubble of Venezuela's powerful twin earthquakes as the death toll reached 1,450 and hopes dwindled more than three days after the disaster struck, AFP reports from La Guaira.

Tens of thousands of people were reported missing as collapsed buildings dotted cities in a country already enduring an economic crisis and political upheaval after US forces captured former president Nicolas Maduro in January.

Millions of people were also feared to lack sanitation and other basic needs after one of Latin America's most devastating earthquakes.

International rescue teams from the US, Mexico and elsewhere scrabbled to save people as desperate residents dug by hand for relatives trapped in the pancaked layers and rubble of collapsed apartments.

47 Iraqi officials held for graft

▸ Iraqi authorities arrested 47 officials, including members of parliament, on Sunday as part of an anti-graft campaign in the corruption-plagued country, state media reported, reports AFP from Baghdad.

Iraq's new prime minister, Ali al-Zaidi, who recently took office with the blessing of the United States, has made two main vows: to fight corruption and to ensure a state monopoly on weapons.

His anti-graft raids come before an expected visit next month to Washington, where he hopes to attract US investment and is expected to renew his promise to ensure pro-Iran armed groups hand over their weapons.

Iraq's news agency INA quoted senior officials as saying that 47 suspects were "arrested on corruption charges," including members of parliament and other officials, with at least one from the oil ministry.

People cheer during the NYC Pride March in New York City, US, on Sunday. REUTERS

Uganda shuts major news outlet

▸ The offices of a major news organisation in Uganda were shut down on the orders of the military chief, who warned Sunday that all media "will follow the rules" while asserting his authority as the East African country's de facto ruler, reports AP from Kampala.

Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba, the eldest son of President Yoweri Museveni, has served as the top military commander since 2024. In recent days, after Museveni was sworn in for a seventh consecutive term, Kainerugaba has strengthened his grip with a series of directives and orders usually reserved for the head of state.

Soldiers were deployed outside the Kampala offices of the Daily Monitor newspaper early Sunday. The paper is part of the Nation Media Group of companies, whose headquarters are in Nairobi.

Fugitive director back in Singapore

▸ An Indian-origin permanent resident, who fled Singapore after allegedly leaving over 400 migrant workers without pay for several months, has returned to the country, a minister announced on Sunday, reports PTI from Singapore.

Ramu Palani Velu, director of three firms -- SK Industries, KPA Engineering, and VVR Plant Engineering – had allegedly abandoned the migrant workers, mostly from India and Bangladesh, prompting them to approach the Ministry of Manpower on June 22 to recover their salaries.

Velu has returned to Singapore and his passport has been impounded, Channel News Asia reported, citing Minister of State for Manpower Dinesh Vasu Dash.Visiting a multi-facility hub where migrant workers are currently living, Dash said his ministry strictly enforces the Employment Act and Employment of Foreign Manpower Act, warning that violators will face action.

A family sits on a bench as a South African Police Service helicopter takes off in Durban, on Sunday. Members of the South African police service displayed their readiness ahead of the June 30 deadline on undocumented foreigners imposed by anti-immigration groups. AFP

Tehran-Dubai flights to resume today: Iranian media

TEHRAN, AFP: Flights between Tehran and Dubai are to resume on Monday, Iranian state media reported, just weeks after Iran hit targets in the UAE with drones and missiles during the Middle East war.

Iranian state TV and other media quoted Ramin Kashefazar, the head of Tehran's Imam Khomeini Airport, as saying that "the necessary arrangements have been made to reopen the Tehran-Dubai route at Imam Khomeini Airport".

Tickets were available to buy on the website of Iranian airline Sepehran for Monday's 10:40 am (0710 GMT) flight to Dubai.

Iran's Mehr news agency, meanwhile, reported that Sepehran would operate another flight departing on Wednesdays at 7.00pm and that Varesh Airlines would run flights on Tuesdays at the same hour.

Ukraine's drone assault ignites major oil refinery in Russia

KYIV, AP: Ukraine kept up its heavy drone assault on Russia, setting fire to a major oil refinery in the south and killing at least two people, Russian authorities said Sunday.

Ukraine has markedly stepped up its long-range attacks on Russian military industries and energy facilities in recent months, aiming to cut Moscow's revenue for its invasion - now in its fifth year - and make Russians feel the consequences.

The campaign has choked Russian fuel supplies and military deliveries. According to Western analysts.

Skydiving plane crash kills 11 in France

TOMBLAINE, AP: Families watched in shock as a skydiving plane carrying their loved ones on what was meant to be a thrilling introduction to parachuting crashed in northeastern France on Sunday, killing all 11 people on board, authorities said.

The dead included five parachuting instructors, five novice jumpers and the pilot, Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said. Transport Minister Philippe Tabarot said it was France's biggest aviation accident involving skydiving in about 30 years.

"Some of the victims' families witnessed the aircraft falling with their own eyes. So there is tremendous emotion and an even greater psychological trauma," Nunez said.

He refused to speculate on what caused the crash but said the plane dropped out of the sky suddenly. He said it had just taken off from the Nancy-Essey airfield on the outskirts of the city of Nancy when it came down about 300 metres from the runway.

A view of a small plane that crashed in Tomblaine, France, on Sunday. REUTERS

Yves Seguy, prefect of the Meurthe-et-Moselle region, said the plane suffered a malfunction and "fell almost vertically," narrowly missing a built-up area.

"Had it occurred just a few dozen metres away, the accident could have caused collateral casualties," he said.

The plane banked to the left after takeoff and crashed less than a minute later near houses, according to the flight tracking service Flightradar24.

Police cordoned off the crumpled wreckage.

Flight tracking sites identified the plane as a single-engine Pilatus PC-6, a small transporter of freight, passengers and skydivers.

Aramco helicopter crash kills 14 in Saudi

RIYADH, AFP: A helicopter crash in Saudi Arabia killed 14 Saudi citizens on Sunday, the kingdom's official press agency reported, adding that the aircraft belonged to state oil giant Aramco.

The Saudi Press Agency, citing an official at the energy ministry, reported the helicopter crashed in Ras Tanura in the country's east.

"The accident claimed the lives of all 14 passengers, all Saudi citizens," the agency said, adding that an investigation was underway to determine the cause of the crash.

The incident took place at 6 am local time.

Aramco says it operates more than 60 aircraft, including helicopters serving more than 300 heliports in Saudi Arabia, making it one of the largest corporate fleets in the region. The deadly accident comes as oil-rich Gulf nations seek to ramp up their output following Iranian attacks and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway for the export of oil and gas.

The Gulf monarchy did not indicate the incident was in any way connected to a hostile attack.

During the Middle East war, Iranian attacks had targeted energy facilities in the Gulf.

Ras Tanura is home to one of the largest refineries in the Middle East, with a capacity of 5,50,000 barrels per day, and is critical to Saudi Arabia's energy sector.

The refinery has been targeted several times, notably during an Iranian drone attack at the beginning of the conflict.

Migrants in US must seek permanent status or leave: Mullin

WASHINGTON, REUTERS

Migrants in the United States on temporary protected status should seek permanent residence or leave for their home countries, US Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin said on Sunday.

The remarks to CNN's "State of the Union" program follow last week's split Supreme Court decision allowing President Donald Trump's administration to strip hundreds of thousands of Haitian and Syrian immigrants of a humanitarian status that protects them from deportation to home countries plagued by conflict and destitution.

"Either try to fill out the paperwork and be here underneath a permanent status or we'll help you get back to your country," Mullin said.

"We'll actually give you a plane ticket, plus roughly $2,100 to help you re-establish when you get there, but temporary protective status, according to the courts and in its name itself, is not permanent status," he added.

Federal law allows the administration to grant temporary legal residency in the United States to people fleeing war, disaster or other conditions.

The status had previously been renewed successively and, despite the move to end these protections, the State Department currently warns against traveling to either Haiti or Syria, citing widespread violence, crime, terrorism and kidnapping.

The United States first provided TPS to Haitians after a devastating earthquake in 2010, and to Syrians after their country descended into civil war in 2012.

ORBITAL RESCUE

Nasa races to save Swift telescope from falling back to Earth

CAPE CANAVERAL (US), AP

Nasa is racing to save an ageing telescope from falling back to Earth with a daring rescue mission.

The $30 million salvage operation gets underway as soon as this week with the planned launch of a robotic lifesaver.

Nasa hired startup Katalyst Space Technologies to boost the Swift Observatory to a higher orbit where it can continue hunting for some of the universe's biggest explosions.

A three-armed spacecraft built by Katalyst will chase after Swift once it takes off from an atoll in the Pacific's Marshall Islands aboard an aeroplane-launched Pegasus rocket. Liftoff could occur as early as Tuesday.

Sinking faster

Scanning the cosmos since its launch in 2004, Swift has been sinking faster and faster because of recent intense solar activity. It needs to get to a higher, more stable orbit as soon as possible to survive.

Nasa's Hubble Space Telescope - also at risk - could be next.

Like Swift, Hubble is losing altitude as the sun erupts with one flare after another. Katalyst Space CEO Ghonhee Lee said his company's next-generation robot, still in development, could save the day for the much bigger Hubble in a couple of years.

Only China has attempted a mission like the upcoming one, successfully boosting a satellite into a higher graveyard orbit four years ago. "This is the first American space robot to go up and do anything like this," Lee said. "Nasa has all these big senior observatories ... all of them can benefit from a service like this. So what we're proving with this mission is this is a new play in the playbook that's available."

It will take Katalyst's autonomous spacecraft, named Lift, about a month to rendezvous with Swift and catch it, and another couple of months to raise its orbit from the current 360 km to the desired 600 km.

India rejects Pak's Karachi attack claim

Asks Islamabad to act against terror infra on its soil

NEW DELHI, PTI

India on Sunday forcefully dismissed Pakistan's allegations of an Indian link to an attack on a military base in Karachi that left four paramilitary personnel dead, saying the neighbouring country should look inwards and take credible action against terror infrastructure on its soil.

Reports from Islamabad said Pakistani security forces killed six terrorists and captured another alive after foiling a brazen attack by militants on a Sindh Rangers compound in Karachi on Saturday night.

The attack left four paramilitary personnel dead and marked the city's first major terrorist strike since October 2024. Certain elements in the Pakistani establishment alleged an Indian link to the attack.

"We have seen Pakistani reports making baseless allegations against India regarding the recent incident in Karachi," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

"We categorically reject them. Instead of pointing fingers at others, Pakistan would do better to look inwards, take credible action against the terror infrastructure on its territory and rid itself of its proclivity to rely on terrorism as an instrument of state policy," he said while responding to a media query.

Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has strongly condemned the attack and alleged without proof an Indian link to the strike.

A report quoted a security source saying the attackers, belonging to Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, a faction of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, stormed the Sindh Rangers' Bhittai Wing headquarters in Karachi's densely populated Gulistan-e-Jauhar, and the gunbattle continued for 90 minutes.

Roaring return: Three eastern reserves set for tiger revival

Buxa, Palamu, Satkosia to see reintroduction

KALYAN RAY
ALWAR, DHNS

Three tiger reserves in eastern India that have lost their big cats over the years are set to be seeded again with tigers from other states, top officials said on Sunday.

Strategies are being finalised to reintroduce tigers in Buxa (West Bengal), Palamu (Jharkhand) and Satkosia (Odisha), for which the timelines are being worked out.

The reintroduction programme will start with Buxa in North Bengal, followed by the other two parks.

The prey base level and support of villagers living inside the forest are the two determining factors.

"Involvement of local communities is essential for the success of tiger reintroduction. The previous attempt at Satkosia failed because the villagers were not on board," said Union Minister for Environment and Forest Bhupender Yadav.

In 2018, two tigers from Kanha and Bandhavgarh were shifted to Satkosia. But within months, they were poisoned by locals once the animals preyed on livestock.

The tiger reintroduction scheme began at Sariska in 2008 after every tiger in the Rajasthan forest was killed. By 2005, the forest had become tiger-less.

Big cat comeback

- Three reserves to be restocked with tigers from other states
- Buxa first in line, followed by Palamu and Satkosia
- Community support and prey base seen as crucial factors
- Satkosia's 2018 attempt failed after locals poisoned relocated tigers

Since the reintroduction, the big cat population at Sariska has risen to 56, and as per early reports from the ongoing tiger census, the number may cross 60 in the next count.

Panna in Madhya Pradesh, where tigers were reintroduced in 2009, has been a success too, with 88 cats recorded in the last count.

But the scheme didn't work in some other forests like Satkosia, Rajaji National Park in Uttrakhand and Mukundara Hills in Rajasthan.

India is home to an estimated 3,682 tigers in 58 reserves, accounting for 70% of the world's wild tiger population. But the distribution remains skewed.

While tiger densities are high in the Western Himalayas, Terai, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Western Ghats, their numbers are very low in eastern India reserves, including Palamu, which was one of the first forests to get protection when Project Tiger began in the 1970s.

According to the 2022 all-India tiger estimation, five reserves—Dampa (Mizoram), Kamlang (Arunachal Pradesh), Kawal (Telangana), Satkosia (Odisha) and Sahyadri (Maharashtra) — officially recorded zero wild tigers. In Palamu and Buxa, a single tiger was spotted in 2022. The numbers were zero in both parks in the previous count in 2018.

Forest officials told *DH* that the National Tiger Conservation Authority has approved the seeding plans for both parks. "Buxa is a priority. We are taking up the proposal with the new government in West Bengal," an official said.

At Palamu, the prey base is being augmented with gaurs, deer and sambhar, another official said, adding that it would take at least another year to decide if the time is suitable for tiger reintroduction.

Top officials from all states with tigers met to deliberate and prepare park-specific strategies.

Humpback whale calf washed ashore in Mumbai dies

MUMBAI, DHNS: A baby humpback whale washed up on Mumbai's shoreline but died during rescue efforts on Saturday. The whale was found near Otters Club, close to the Bandra-Versova Sea Link.

"The baby humpback whale was later confirmed dead. In a coordinated operation, teams from the Mumbai Fire Brigade and the Bandra–Versova Sea Link used a crane to carefully lift the animal off the rocky shoreline before it was transported for burial," according to a X post by BandraBuzz.

"The death of the whale off Mumbai is deeply distressing and should be treated as a warning from nature," said B N Kumar, Director of NatConnect Foundation. Marine mammals are highly sensitive to environmental changes, and such strandings often indicate deeper ecological stress, he pointed out.

MEA advisory for Mansarovar pilgrims using private operators

NEW DELHI, PTI: The Ministry of External Affairs has cautioned Indian citizens undertaking the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through trips organised by private tour operators, and also asked the pilgrims to verify if their tour operator is duly registered and authorised.

"This Ministry is in receipt of several requests for help and assistance from Indian citizens stuck in Nepal while undertaking Kailash Mansarovar Yatra without the required entry permit and visas for China, through tours organised by private tour operators," the MEA said in an advisory.

The advisory, issued late on Saturday night, is for Indian citizens undertaking the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra with private tour operators.

CERT-In warns WhatsApp users of malware campaign

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

VIRTUAL TROUBLE

- Attackers use earlier compromised accounts to send harmful files
- CERT-In says malicious VBScript files being distributed using direct messages
- The messages appear to be sent from trusted contacts
- Once opened, file can grant remote access to victim's device

The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) has issued a fresh alert cautioning WhatsApp web and desktop users against a widespread malware distribution campaign that could allow cybercriminals unauthorised access to devices and sensitive data.

In an advisory issued on June 25, CERT-In said threat actors are distributing malicious Visual Basic Script (VBScript or .vbs) files through direct messages on the platform.

"Attackers use previously compromised WhatsApp accounts to send malicious VBScript (vbs) files to existing contacts. Because the messages originate from trusted contacts, recipients may be more inclined to open the attachment," the advisory noted, citing findings from Kaspersky and Securelist.

WhatsApp's cross-platform nature, which allows messaging and file sharing across mobile, web, and desktop versions, is being exploited in this operation.

Once opened, the malicious files can grant remote access to the victim's device, enabling attackers to steal credentials, deploy additional malware, spy on activities, or spread the infection across connected networks.

The potential fallout includes financial fraud, business disruption, and significant data breaches, CERT-In warned.

CERT-In has urged users to exercise extreme caution with any unexpected attachments, even from known contacts. "Do not open attachments you were not expecting, even if they come from a friend, colleague, or family member," it stated.

It is recommended to verify the legitimacy of suspicious files by calling or messaging the sender directly. "If the sender's message seems unusual or out of character, treat it as suspicious," it added.

This warning comes amid rising sophisticated cyber threats. On June 10, CERT-In had strengthened security compliance requirements for original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) producing mobile phones, computers, and related devices in response to the growing use of AI in cyber-attacks.

Users are advised to keep their WhatsApp applications and operating systems updated, enable two-factor authentication, and avoid downloading or executing files from unverified sources on the desktop or web versions of the app.

Will return to Bangladesh 'this year', says Sheikh Hasina

NEW DELHI, AFP

Former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has vowed to return to her country "this year", according to an interview published on Sunday, months after she was sentenced to death in absentia for crimes against humanity.

Sheikh Hasina

Hasina (78) fled to India in August 2024 after a student-led uprising ended her 15-year rule. She has not been seen in public since, except for a rare speech broadcast to a packed press club in New Delhi in January.

In an interview with an Indian broadcaster, Hasina said she was not afraid of death, and that the verdict against her was "part of an illegal, unconstitutional and politically motivated process".

"Many conspiracies have been hatched against me. But breaking through every web of conspiracy... I was elected PM five times by the people's vote and worked for the country's unprecedented development," she said.

"I want to say clearly: Overcoming every obstacle and every conspiracy, I will return to my country this year," she added in response to a question on whether she would return despite the death penalty verdict.

The backdrop

Last November, Hasina was found guilty by a Dhaka court of incitement, order to kill, and inaction to prevent atrocities, and sentenced to be hanged.

The activities of her party—the Awami League, once one of the country's most popular—have been outlawed.

Ties between India and Bangladesh have improved since Prime Minister Tarique Rahman won a landslide election victory in February in the South Asian nation of 17 crore people.

However, frictions remain, with Bangladesh repeatedly demanding Hasina's extradition.

Rieko wins the Chief Minister's Cup

BENGALURU RESULTS

S John-trained Rieko, ridden by Neeraj Rawal, won the Chief Minister's Cup over 1200m, the feature event of the races held here on Sunday.

1. Littleover Plate 1200M: Preview (Sans Craintes Stud Farm) Suraj Narredu 1, Calix (Akshay Kumar) 2, Sai Princess (Jagadeesh) 3, Charming Prospect (Ashhad Asbar) 4; WB: 2, 1-1/2, Snk; T: 1:13.68; Tote: Rs 35w, 10, 11, 49p; Shp: Rs 30; Thp: Rs 105; Fc: Rs 68; Q: Rs 22; Tri: Rs 917 & 872; Exp: Rs 5067 & 303; TB: JE Mckeown; Fav: Calix.

2. Mahalakshmi Plate 1600M: Michiko (Amarjeet Singh Naula) Kiran Rai 1, Sea Diamond (Vishal Shivhare) 2, Rising Form (Faizan Khan) 3, Magna Carta (S Sachin) 4; WB: 4-1/4, 1/2, 3L; T: 1:39.79; Tote: Rs 17w, 12, 13, 51p; Shp: Rs 33; Thp: Rs 115; Fc: Rs 70; Q: Rs 49; Tri: Rs 1013 & 634; Exp: Rs 1217 & 347; TB: GY Rajesh Babu; Fav: Michiko.

3. Richelieu Stakes 1400M: Steely Challenge (Rapar's Galloping and Rajan Aggarwal) Antony Raj 1, Queendom (Akshay Kumar) 2, Lightning Blitz (Suraj Narredu) 3, Miracle Beauty (Ankush) 4; Not run: Lots Of Luck; WB: 4-3/4, 5-1/4, 6-1/2; : 1:24.54; Tote: Rs 16w, 10, 14, 11p; Shp: Rs 40; Thp: Rs 29; Fc: Rs 73; Q: Rs 44; Tri: Rs 83 & 34; Exp: Rs 492 & 453; TB: D Byramji; Fav: Steely Challenge.

4. Chief Minister's Cup 1200M: Rieko (P Arun Kumar) Neeraj Rawal 1, Dream Seller (A Sandesh) 2, Crown Drive (Hindu Singh) 3, Knotty Charmer (Antony Raj) 4; WB: 3/4, Lnk, Hd; T: 1:12.21; Tote: Rs 22w, 10, 13p; Shp: Rs 27; Thp: Rs 33; Fc: Rs 41; Q: Rs 18; Tri: Rs 136 & 83; Exp: Rs 357 & 60; TB: S John; Fav: Rieko.

5. Karnataka Sub-Area Cup 1400M: Vegatha (Cherie Sports, Smita Bajoria and Cheriyan Abraham) Antony Raj 1, Lux Aeterna (Akshay Kumar) 2, Victoria Doresaani (Alex Rozario) 3, Irish Coffee (H J Arul) 4; Not run: Gachchhatu; WB: 3/4, 3-1/4, 2; T: 1:24.65; Tote: Rs 16w, 10, 12, 12p; Shp: Rs 34; Thp: Rs 27; Fc: Rs 61; Q: Rs 47; Tri: Rs 183 & 56; Exp: Rs 840 & 784; TB: PS Chouhan; Fav: Vegatha.

6. Tudor Jet Plate 1200M: River Deep (Ashhad Asbar) 1, Carat Love (Akshay Kumar) 2, Noble Cause (S Sachin) 3, Il Volo (Kiran Rai) 4; WB: 1-1/2, 1-1/2, Ns; T: 1:12.98; Tote: Rs 23w, 11, 13, 15p; Shp: Rs 47; Thp: Rs 49; Fc: Rs 70; Q: Rs 35; Tri: Rs 157 & 72; Exp: Rs 233 & 93; TB: V Lokanath; Fav: River Deep.

7. Desert God Plate 1600M: Imperador (Arun Alagappan, M P Vikram, A S Karthik Chandra, Ronak J Kimmane and Ananth Iyengar) Vishal Bunde 1, Regal Aristocracy (Antony Raj) 1, Pledge (Akshay Kumar) 3, Absolute Thunder (J H Arul) 4; WB: 1-1/4, 1 1/4, 5-3/4; T: 1:37.09; Tote: Rs 61w, 15, 14, 15p; Shp: Rs 43; Thp: Rs 49; Fc: Rs 330; Q: Rs 103; Tri: Rs 539 & 103; Exp: Rs 1101 & 688; TB: P Prasanna Kumar; Fav: Pledge.

Jackpot: Rs 1177 & 70. **Mini jackpot:** Rs 667. **I treble:** Rs 84. **II treble:** Rs 246.

ATHLETICS INTER-STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Rohit makes the javelin talk

Karnataka relay teams bag double silver; Vishal wins 400m race

ADITYA K HALDER
BHUBANESWAR, DHNS

Uttar Pradesh's Rohit Yadav, once regarded as an understudy to Tokyo Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra, announced himself as India's leading javelin thrower this season with a massive 87.05m effort at the National Inter-State Athletics Championships here on Sunday.

The men's long jump also produced impressive performances as favourite Murali Sreeshankar soared to an Asian season's best of 8.38m while Shahnavaz Khan followed with an 8.30m leap as both athletes secured qualification for the Asian Games.

Former national record holder Sreeshankar continued his impressive form in 2026, producing a consistent series of 8.06, 8.00, 8.21, 8.38 and 8.26m. Shahnavaz was the only other athlete in the field to breach the eight-metre mark on the evening. The evening, however, belonged to Rohit. His winning throw surpassed Neeraj's season best of 85.69, achieved at the Doha Diamond League earlier this month, while comfortably clearing the Asian Games qualification mark of 77.81. The throw, which came on his final attempt, is the second-best effort in Asia this year behind Sri Lanka's Rumesh Pathirage's 92.62m.

Rohit Yadav (left) overtook Neeraj Chopra as India's leading javelin thrower this season while M Sreeshankar became Asia's leading long jumper of the season in Bhubaneswar on Sunday. DH PHOTOS/ ADITYA K HALDER

"The throw tonight came very late, much like most of my career," said Rohit. "I have been trying to go past 85 metres for many years now, but it never happened. Finally, it has happened, and I feel it is the beginning of many good things to come."

The 25-year-old athlete's rise to prominence had previously been stalled by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the one-year postponement costing him a chance to compete at the World U-20 Championships. Having battled injuries last year, Rohit said he has since focused extensively on improving his strength and conditioning.

"I gained some weight during my injury last year and then worked on my strength and conditioning to improve my distance. I was trying to throw big from the beginning of the season but it just wasn't coming off despite some positive signs in training," he said.

Meanwhile, two more javelin throwers -- Yashvir Singh (83.72) and Sachin Yadav (82.32) -- comfortably crossed the Asiad qualification mark..

Supriya qualifies

Karnataka high jumper Supriya B, who trains at the Air Force camp in Jalahalli, cleared the Asian Games qualification mark with a personal best of 1.80, improving her career-best after six years. She claimed silver behind national record holder Pooja, who won the title with a clearance of 1.83 before failing at 1.90.

Results: Men: 400m: Vishal TK (TN) 45.43, 1; Manu T S (Ker) 45.60, 2; Jay Kumar (UP) 45.73, 3.
3000m steeplechase: Balkishan (Har) 8:50.98, 1; Sharuk Khan (UP) 8:53.18, 2; Shubham Bhandare (Mah) 8:54.90, 3.
10000m: Abhishek Pal (UP) 30:03.88, 1; Sawan Barwal (HP) 30:08.08, 2; Shailesh Kushwaha (Kar) 30:23.13, 3.
4x400m Relay: Tamil Nadu 3:09.32, 1; Karnataka (Aryan Kashyap, Theerthesh Shetty, Mijo Kurian, Yashas Palaksha) 3:09.51, 2; Kerala 3:09.89, 3.
Women: 3000m Steeplechase: Ankita (Utk) 9:44.05, 1; Khushbu Gupta (UP) 10:36.47, 2; Kumari Parru (Raj) 10:52.28, 3.
4x400m Relay: Tamil Nadu 3:35.87, 1; Karnataka (Sinchal, Poovamma Raju, Vijayakumari GK, Priya Mohan) 3:36.18, 2; Kerala 3:39.70, 3.
High Jump: Pooja (Har) 1.89m, 1; Devika (Kar) 1.86m, 2; Shravani Jangate (Mah) 1.83m, 3.
Heptathlon: Pooja (Har) 5619 pts, 1; Anamika K A (Ker) 5466 pts, 2; Khushi (Har) 5438 pts, 3.

Yashas, Sneha call for CM Shivakumar's help

ADITYA K HALDER
BHUBANESWAR, DHNS

Karnataka's top track and field athletes Yashas Palaksha and SS Sneha have placed their faith in newly appointed Chief Minister DK Shivakumar to do them justice after the duo was excluded from the state government's flagship annual incentive scheme for Olympic training.

400m hurdler Yashas and sprinter Sneha qualified for the Asian Games while winning the gold and silver medals in their respective events at the National Inter-State Athletics Championships here on Saturday.

Yashas, earlier, was also picked for the Commonwealth Games after he became the fastest active hurdler in the country at 49.00 seconds.

SS Sneha (left) and Yashas Palaksha.

Yashas, who serves in the Indian Army as a Havildar, was hopeful of CM Shivakumar including them in the state government's scheme that provides Rs 10 lakh annually for three years until the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

"Our new CM Shivakumar sir is a former athlete too. Since he has taken charge, I believe he can do something for the betterment of athletes in the state," Yashas told *DH*.

The 24-year-old Tumakuru athlete won the men's final in a photo finish with his perennial rival Santhosh T of Tamil Nadu at 49.14 seconds.

Meanwhile, Sneha, who just returned from her gold medal triumph in women's 4x100m relay at the Asian Relay Championships in China last week, took the silver medal in 11.65 seconds in the 100m final behind Maharashtra's Sudeshna Shivankar (11.59).

B'luru's Pratitee scripts history

BENGALURU, DHNS

Bengaluru's Pratitee Bordoloi made history by winning the silver medal in the girls' under-18 category at the FIDE World Youth Chess Championship in Montesilvano, Italy, on Saturday.

The 13-year-old became the first Indian to finish on the podium at the event. The second-place finish also gave Pratitee her first Women's International Master (WIM) norm.

Competing against players close to five years older than herself, Pratitee entered the tournament as the 16th seed with a FIDE rating of 2129. She scored 9 points from 11 rounds (7 wins, 4 draws), finishing second overall while gaining more than 129 Elo rating points and posting a tournament performance rating of around 2350.

Pratitee Bordoloi

Pratitee scored four consecutive wins early on to move into the joint lead.

She then defeated Azerbaijan's WIM Narmin Abdinova in a crucial sixth-round encounter to move into sole second place, prompting FIDE to highlight her as one of the championship's breakout performers. Her subsequent top-board clash against eventual champion Valeria Kleymenova (10 points) became one of the defining games of the tournament.

Gritty India edge England in penalty shoot-out

LONDON, PTI: India avenged their defeat to England with a gritty 3-2 penalty shoot-out victory after a hard-fought goalless draw in the return leg of the Hockey Pro League here on Sunday.

Abhishek, Shilanand Lakra and Hardik Singh **(in pic)** converted their attempts in the shoot-out as India secured the bonus point with a composed display under pressure.

England dominated the early exchanges and earned a penalty corner after Sam Ward was brought down by Yashdeep Singh. India goalkeeper Mohith Shashikumar produced a superb double save before denying Ward again and then Sanford to keep the hosts at bay.

India's best chance of the opening quarter fell to Abhishek, who threatened late in the period, but England enjoyed the better of the possession and attacking opportunities.

The hosts maintained the pressure in the second quarter and came close through Bandurak, while India responded with a Jarmanpreet Singh effort that was well saved by the England goalkeeper. Despite sustained attacks, India's defence stood firm as the teams went into the break 0-0.

TEAMS: 48 VENUES: 16 TOURNAMENT SPAN: 39 DAYS

Immaculate Messi in seventh heaven!

Argentina's Lionel Messi bends the ball past the wall to score a history-making goal against Jordan during their Group J clash on Saturday. REUTERS

A much-changed Argentina scored in the first half through a Lo Celso free-kick and a penalty by Lautaro Martinez.

Mousa Al-Tamari pulled one back 10 minutes after half-time for Jordan, whose first World Cup was already over.

Scaloni made nine changes, retaining only goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez and forward Lautaro Martinez from the Austria win.

Jordan were already eliminated after defeats to Algeria and Austria, rendering the match inconsequential in terms of the tournament.

But competition in the Argentina squad is fierce and Scaloni wanted his side to join France and co-hosts Mexico with nine points.

Argentina also wanted to make a statement ahead of the meeting with surprise packages Cape Verde as they attempt to become the first team since Brazil in 1962 to win back-to-back World Cups.

The home of the Dallas Cowboys was packed with Argentina fans and their team dominated from the off.

Lo Celso got the party started, bending in a free-kick on 19 minutes that goalkeeper Yazeed Abulaila got nowhere near having inexplicably moved in the opposite direction.

A relaxed-looking Messi smiled broadly from the sidelines.

Soon after the champions doubled their lead when Martinez rifled in a penalty following a VAR review when Marcos Senesi appeared to be kicked in the face as he went for a diving header.

Minutes after half-time the crowd began calling for their captain Messi, the leading scorer in World Cup history.

Argentine becomes first player to score in 7 straight WC matches

ARLINGTON (US), AFP

Lionel Messi came off the bench to score his sixth goal of the tournament as Argentina warmed up for their World Cup knockout match with Cape Verde by beating Jordan 3-1 on Saturday.

The ageless Messi tops the scoring charts in North America as the tournament heads into the last 32. Messi's 80th-minute free kick saw him move past France's Just Fontaine and Brazilian Jairzinho by scoring in a seventh World Cup match in a row at the finals.

Cape Verde's players will be wondering how they can stop Messi when the debutants, ranked 67, face the champions on July 3 in Miami.

Argentina	Jordan
3	1

With qualification already in the bag, Messi started on the bench but came on after an hour in Texas to huge cheers to get his side's third with a free-kick.

Argentina finished emphatically top of Group J with maximum points after also beating Algeria 3-0 and defeating Austria 2-0, all those goals coming from Messi.

The holders and their 39-year-old talisman look formidable, albeit in one of the weaker groups.

Coach Lionel Scaloni said Messi could have played the full game.

"But he chose to let his team-mates have minutes, he chose to think about what's coming, and that speaks volume about him," he said.

Giovani Lo Celso, who scored Argentina's first of the evening, said it had been almost the perfect group stage.

"We knew we had very tough opponents, that it wasn't going to be easy," he said.

"It's a pity about the goal we conceded today, we would've liked to end with a clean sheet.

"Still, I think it was a very good group stage. Now the most important part begins. From now on, it's about turning the page and thinking about Cape Verde, who will be a very tough opponent."

Scaloni running out of superlatives for Messi

Lionel Messi

DALLAS, REUTERS

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said he is running out of ways to describe the performances of Lionel Messi after seeing his captain become the first player to score in seven consecutive World Cup matches in their 3-1 win over Jordan on Saturday.

Messi was introduced from the bench on the hour mark at Dallas Stadium and netted an 80th-minute free kick to continue a scoring run that saw him surpass the mark he shared with France's Just Fontaine and Brazilian Jairzinho.

"It's a little bit of an uncomfortable situation when people ask me that and I don't know what to say," Scaloni said when quizzed once again about Messi's performance.

"Today he could've played 90 minutes and, without undermining our opponent, he wanted his team-mates to have time on the pitch and to save himself for what's coming up.

"He doesn't think so much about the numbers that people are talking about. The only word that comes to mind is that I'm surprised."

Messi's strike put the seal on a largely comfortable win for the champions, who took a two-goal lead into the interval following a Giovani Lo Celso free kick and a penalty from Lautaro Martinez.

Those goals were the first not scored by Messi for Argentina at the current World Cup, before the 39-year-old took his total to a tournament-leading six.

Scaloni had made nine changes to his starting line-up and he was pleased with the performances of those who had featured little in the tournament so far.

"It's a very positive opinion that I have, especially as I was able to include all the players, this was a goal we always set for ourselves," he said.

"I believe all of them deserve to enjoy coming to a World Cup and playing here and we were able to give them minutes. I think they played quite well"

Wissa dedicates goals to war-torn DR Congo

ATLANTA, AFP

Yoane Wissa dedicated his goals that sent the Democratic Republic of Congo into the knockout stages of the World Cup for the first time to those suffering back home from a humanitarian crisis caused by war.

Newcastle striker Wissa scored twice in a 3-1 victory over Uzbekistan to give the African side their first-ever World Cup win and set up a meeting with England in the last 32.

DR Congo	Uzbekistan
3	1

Eastern Congo has been plagued for three decades by conflict involving a litany of armed groups.

DR Congo is also fighting an Ebola outbreak that has claimed more than 300 lives.

But backed by thousands from the Congolese diaspora in Atlanta, the Leopards roared back from a goal down on Saturday to make history.

"We are a proud country. We are proud people. We love our country. We love our national team. We love what we represent!" Wissa told reporters.

"I think tonight we just showed what it means for us is just to fight no matter what.

"It's not easy in our country. There's a war in East Congo. Every day, every time we wear this shirt, we think about them.

"That's why tonight, what we show is just to say that guys, no matter what, we need to keep going.

"Because we want peace and for them, I just say 'thank you'. Thank you because we came from far. We came from nothing to be here. Now we write our story with a black pen and we need to be proud."

Wissa's double took his tally for the tournament to three goals.

Yoane Wissa

Congo wipe away 52 years of pain

ATLANTA, REUTERS

The Democratic Republic of Congo's only previous World Cup appearance left a shadow over the country's football history, but more than half a century later they wrote a new chapter in Atlanta by clinching a place in the knockout stages on Saturday.

DR Congo players collapsed to the turf before celebrating a historic 3-1 win over Uzbekistan which sealed their spot in the round of 32 as one of eight best third-placed sides.

Their first World Cup was unforgettable for all the wrong reasons, but 52 years later, Congo have made their mark on the tournament in the best way possible.

DR Congo goal-scorer Yoane Wissa (No. 20) leads the celebrations after his side defeated Uzbekistan to punch a historic round of 32 ticket on Saturday. AFP

In 1974, with the country then called Zaire, they exited the tournament in embarrassing fashion after three defeats in which they failed to score and conceded 14 goals, including a 9-0 hammering by Yugoslavia.

In 2026, DR Congo had already restored their image in their opening Group K match with Portugal, scoring their first World Cup goal and earning their first point when they held their Cristiano Ronaldo-led opponents to a 1-1 draw.

A 1-0 loss to Colombia followed but the Congolese went into Saturday's clash with Uzbekistan knowing a win would see them advance and they duly delivered despite going in a goal behind at the break.

DR Congo arrived in the USA on the back of an Ebola outbreak which disrupted pre-tournament plans, and little was expected of a side which needed 13 games to qualify, including an inter-confederation victory over Jamaica after extra time.

Their debut World Cup came 14 years after independence from Belgium and following their first qualifying campaign. They went to West Germany on the back of winning their second Africa Cup of Nations, but those dizzy heights seemed unlikely to return.

Until now, when this team have restored pride to a country scarred by decades of war and frequent political upheaval, and currently in the midst of a medical emergency.

Chills & thrills grip Austria, Algeria draw

KANSAS CITY, AFP

Algeria and Austria played out a captivating 3-3 draw in Kansas City on Saturday that ensured both teams qualified for the World Cup knockout rounds and eliminated Iran.

Riyad Mahrez appeared to have won the game for the North African side in stoppage time but there was still time for Sasa Kalajdzic, just on as a substitute, to level.

The result at Arrowhead Stadium means both teams finished Group J on four points behind Lionel Messi's Argentina, who topped the section with nine points after three wins.

Austria	Algeria
3	3

Austria are in the World Cup knockout rounds for the first time since 1982, while Algeria have matched their performance at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.

Algeria will play Switzerland in the round of 32 while Austria, who finished second in the group, have a tough task against European champions Spain.

Both sides appeared to have settled for a mutually beneficial draw as the clock ticked down on a humid night in the American Midwest before the late drama.

Austria midfielder Marcel Sabitzer, who scored Austria's second goal, described the closing moments as "weird".

"It's a draw normally, so you think you go through and then one moment from Algeria...," he said.

"They also have top quality in the midfield and Mahrez with a very good finish. Then you are emotionally down, but you need to get up until the final whistle.

"We did it and we were very lucky at the end, but very happy about that."

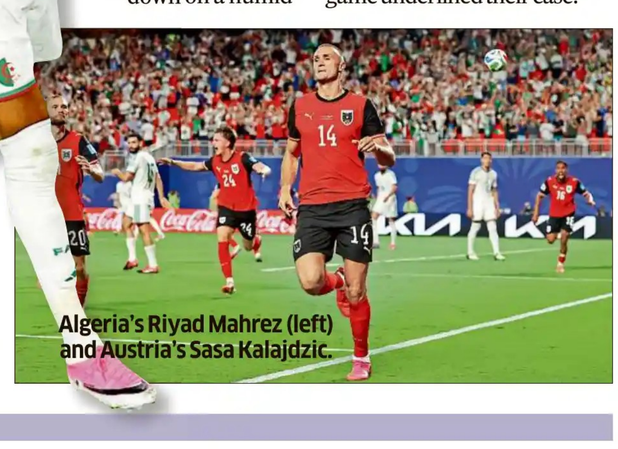
Former Manchester City star Mahrez, who was named man of the match, said Algeria were delighted to qualify for the knockout rounds for only the second time in their history.

"It's a special feeling to score at the World Cup," said the 35-year-old winger, who now plays in Saudi Arabia.

Conspiracy talk

The build-up to the game was dominated by speculation over whether both teams would try to avoid finishing second in order to swerve Spain, who are one of the favourites to win the World Cup.

Both managers dismissed any suggestion that the match would be rigged and the nature of the game underlined their case.



Algeria's Riyad Mahrez (left) and Austria's Sasa Kalajdzic.

Portugal-Colombia clash entertains without goals

Colombia's Deiver Machado (right) and Portugal's Joao Neves battle for possession during their 0-0 draw at the Miami Gardens, Florida, on Saturday. AP/PTI

MIAMI, REUTERS

As Portugal and Colombia squared up for their final World Cup group game, top spot in Group K was on the line and the intensity on display from both teams matched the stakes in an entertaining but ultimately goalless draw.

Portugal	Colombia
0	0

Both sides approached the match with a competitive edge that produced an open, transitional game at times resembling basketball in its relentless back-and-forth rhythm. The atmosphere in a full house at Miami Stadium tilted heavily in Colombia's favour, their supporters vastly outnumbering the Portuguese contingent as they imposed themselves, greeting every spell of Portuguese possession with a chorus of whistles that turned the stadium into a temporary home venue, as Portugal boss Roberto Martinez had predicted.

On the pitch, what stood out for Colombia was the collective understanding between the players, their movement co-ordinated without appearing rehearsed, each player creating space for the next pass.

Portugal's pressing structure was repeatedly bypassed, not through brute force but through Colombia's well-drilled timing, imagination and technical quality.

Flair & confidence

Such was the flair and confidence they played with, and there were moments when the team in yellow shirts and blue shorts evoked memories of the great Brazil sides of yesteryear.

But Portugal found greater balance after the hydration break. Bruno Fernandes forced Camilo Vargas into an excellent reflex save from close range, while Joao Felix went close as the match opened up.

The improved spell highlighted Portugal's attacking potential, even if it also exposed their vulnerabilities.

TEAMS: 48 VENUES: 16 TOURNAMENT SPAN: 39 DAYS

FIFA WORLD CUP

Scotland coach Clarke quits

Scotland coach Steve Clarke is stepping down after the team was eliminated from the World Cup even though he signed a new four-year contract only a month before, reports AP from Charlotte (US).

Clarke announced he was leaving in an emotional letter to Scotland's "Tartan Army" supporters shortly after Croatia's 2-1 win over Ghana on Saturday ensured Scotland could no longer qualify for the round of 32.

His seven years in charge saw Scotland reach its first World Cup since 1998 and qualify twice for the European Championship, having not done so since 1996. Scotland's players "deserve all the praise and adulation that they receive and it was truly an honor to be called their Gaffer (boss)," Clarke wrote.

Round of 32 Schedule

Round of 32

June 29

South Africa vs Canada
● Los Angeles ● 12:30 am

Brazil vs Japan
● Houston ● 10:30 pm

July 1

France vs Sweden
● New Jersey ● 02:30 am

Mexico vs Ecuador
● Mexico City ● 06:30 am

England vs DR Congo
● Atlanta ● 09:30 pm

July 3

Spain vs Austria
● Los Angeles ● 2:30 am

Portugal vs Croatia
● Toronto ● 04:30 am

Switzerland vs Algeria
● Vancouver ● 08:30 am

Australia vs Egypt
● Dallas ● 11:30 pm

June 30

Germany vs Paraguay
● Boston ● 02:00 am

Netherlands vs Morocco
● Monterrey ● 06:30 am

Ivory Coast vs Norway
● Dallas ● 10:30 pm

July 2

Belgium vs Senegal
● Seattle ● 01:30 am

USA vs Bosnia & Herzegovina
● San Francisco ● 05:30 am

July 4

Argentina vs Cape Verde
● Miami ● 3:30 am

Colombia vs Ghana
● Kansas City ● 07:00 am

Live on Zee5 & Unite8.
All timings in IST

Rejuvenated Brazil gunning for revenge

Injury-hit Japan aiming for another shocker in last-32 clash

NEW YORK, REUTERS

Brazil's World Cup round of 32 meeting with Japan on Monday comes with the chance for revenge for Carlo Ancelotti's squad and a test of how far he has taken his team since a Tokyo collapse early in his tenure.

The five-time world champions were beaten 3-2 by Japan in October 2025 after leading 2-0 in a friendly, conceding three goals in less than 20 minutes as the hosts claimed their first win over Brazil in 14 meetings.

It was another reminder of the job Ancelotti had inherited after leaving Real Madrid with only a year to turn a disjointed team into World Cup challengers.

Brazil were wobbling when the Italian arrived, about to complete their worst South American qualifying campaign, finishing fifth after working under four different managers.

With only five international breaks before selecting his 26-man squad, Ancelotti used the last three to broaden Brazil's horizons, taking on opponents from Asia, Europe and Africa.

The Asia leg began smoothly enough. Brazil thrashed South Korea 5-0 in Seoul and looked on course for another comfortable win in Tokyo after racing into a 2-0 lead inside a little over half an hour.

However, Japan roared back in the second half and Brazil were left with an uncomfortable souvenir.

Monday's match in Houston, however, will be a very different affair.

"Perhaps... they will be even more motivated," Japan manager Hajime Moriyasu told reporters after his side's 1-1 draw with Sweden secured second place in Group F behind the Netherlands.

"We will be playing against a Brazil side that is very keen to win. I'm looking forward to it."

Japan will be much changed from the side that stunned Brazil, with injuries depriving Moriyasu of captain Wataru Endo, wingers Kaoru Mitoma and Takefusa Kubo and forward Takumi Minamino, who scored in the October victory.

Brazil also look different. The defence that started in Tokyo has disappeared from Ancelotti's World Cup squad entirely, and the team have been improving after opening the tournament with a 1-1 draw against Morocco.

Back-to-back wins have sharpened the mood, Vinicius Jr has scored four goals and Neymar has returned to the national team after three years out because of persistent injuries.

"We're not perfect. We can improve. For example, our pace on the ball. We can be quicker," Ancelotti said after Brazil beat Scotland 3-0.

"But I'm pleased because the team has improved a lot since the first match. Now it's a knockout competition. We need to show real grit."

The fixture also carries a deeper historical thread. Brazil have long been a reference point for Japanese football, a relationship embodied by Zico.

After success with Flamengo, Udinese and Brazil, he came out of retirement to play for Sumitomo Metal, later Kashima Antlers, from 1991 to 1994, helping shape Japan's developing professional game. He later managed Kashima and now works as a technical adviser at the club. Zico also coached Japan from 2002 to 2006, winning the 2004 Asian Cup and guiding them to the 2006 World Cup, where Brazil beat them 4-1 in the group stage.

Brazil's Vinicius Junior, who has been in red-hot form this World Cup, will be key to their chances when they take on Japan on Monday. AFP

Japan believe they can beat Brazil, says former coach

TOKYO, AFP

Japan believe they can shock Brazil in the World Cup round of 32, and former coach Philippe Troussier thinks it would be a fitting reward for their progress as a football nation.

Frenchman Troussier led Japan when they co-hosted the World Cup with South Korea in 2002 and took them to the last 16 in only their second tournament appearance.

Japan have not missed a World Cup since, and they have openly talked about winning this year's competition in North America, where they face Brazil in Houston on Monday.

Philippe Troussier

Not even a showdown with the five-time champions can shake Japan's current confidence, and Troussier believes it is fully justified.

"In only one game, everything is possible," the 71-year-old told AFP at France's chamber of commerce in Tokyo on Friday. "Japan have confidence. They have talent. They have made tremendous tactical progress in the last few years, and they have so many experienced players who play for strong sides in Europe.

"Of course Brazil have fantastic players and they are favourites on paper but there are weaknesses that Japan could exploit."

Bellingham restores Three Lions' roar

EAST RUTHERFORD (US), REUTERS

Jude Bellingham dragged England out of a rainy New Jersey grind on Saturday, scoring one goal and creating another for Harry Kane as Thomas Tuchel's side beat Panama 2-0 to top Group L and avoid a nervy route through the World Cup knockout phase.

England will play DR Congo, who beat Uzbekistan 3-1, in the round of 32 after finishing first with seven points. Croatia have six points, following their 2-1 win against Ghana, who ended on four. Panama lost all three matches and finished bottom.

After a flat first half and a frustrating hour in which England dominated possession without cutting Panama open, Bellingham finally forced the breakthrough in the 62nd minute.

Bukayo Saka's corner from the left dropped into a crowded box, where Bellingham, despite being held by a defender, wrestled enough space to stab a left-footed finish past goalkeeper Orlando Mosquera.

Five minutes later, Bellingham took charge again on the left and clipped in a cross for Kane, who rose above his marker to head home. It was Kane's 11th World Cup goal for England, moving him past Gary Lineker's mark of 10 and making him the country's all-time leading scorerat World Cups.

The goal transformed the mood at the New York New Jersey Stadium, where anxious England supporters who had spent much of the afternoon biting their nails were soon singing along to Bon Jovi during the hydration break.

England	Panama
2	0

"A solid performance again, against a side with fast, tricky players," said Kane.

"They had little moments but overall we controlled it pretty well. First half maybe a little bit sloppy in the final third, got better in the second half. Would have liked to see out the game a little bit easier.

Tuchel had made five changes from the side held 0-0 by Ghana. Reece James missed out with a hamstring problem, with Jarell Quansah starting at right back, while Nico O'Reilly returned at left back.

Declan Rice was rested and Morgan Rogers came into a more attack-minded midfield. Saka and Marcus Rashford replaced Noni Madueke and Anthony Gordon.

Rashford had England's first clear opening in the seventh minute, driving a low shot from the edge of the box that forced Mosquera into a fine save. Much of England's early work came through Rashford and Bellingham on the left, but Panama remained dangerous on the break and Jordan Pickford had to save well from Jose Rodriguez in the 26th minute.

England became increasingly predictable. Rashford saw plenty of the ball but often held it too long, while Saka was isolated on the right and quickly surrounded whenever he tried to drive forward.

Rashford headed wide from close range in the 37th minute and Elliot Anderson tested Mosquera from distance.

England midfielder Jude Bellingham (No. 10) scores the opening goal against Panama in New Jersey on Saturday. AFP

Nikola Vlasic (second from left) heads a goal for Croatia during their 2-1 win over Ghana in a Group L contest at the Philadelphia Stadium, USA. REUTERS

Slow starters Croatia hit their stride

PHILADELPHIA, REUTERS

Croatia left it late to find a little World Cup sparkle, but history suggests they will not be worried by a sluggish group- stage performance as they head into the business end of the tournament where they usually thrive the most.

In a match in which they could have been eliminated, Nikola Vlasic's late header ensured Croatia beat Ghana 2-1 in Saturday's Group L finale, with a performance that showed promise after two opening games short on quality.

Croatia	Ghana
2	1

Croatia are notorious slow starters, including at the 2022 World Cup where they went on to reach the semifinals, with two goalless group-stage draws, back-to-back penalty shootouts and only a single victory in open play — against Canada.

They have made life difficult for themselves in major tournaments, eliminated in the group stage and round of 16 at the past two Euros, and a nervy route to the 2018 World Cup final that required two penalty shootouts and an extra-time winner.

The Vatreni, or "blazers", lacked fire early on, roundly beaten 4-2 by England and uninspiring in a 1-0 win over Panama, in which they had only two shots on target.

But they outclassed a Ghanaian team with a fortress of a defence and clean sheets in their opening two matches, including holding England to a draw.

Croatia made three changes, giving a first start to goalscorer Vlasic, who early on fired in a sizzling long-range strike that clipped the post. Coach Zlatko Dalic also brought back Inter Milan's Petar Sucic, who put them ahead with a first-half thunderbolt low into the corner.

Ballon d'Or winner Luka Modric, who passed the 200-cap mark against Panama aged 40, hit his stride as the engine of the Croatian team and was essential in breaking down Ghana's defence and making two vital blocks to keep them at bay.

With the scores level seven minutes from time, it was Modric who served up the curling corner that Vlasic headed home brilliantly.

German stars under pressure to deliver

BOSTON (MASSACHUSETTS), REUTERS

Germany will need to up their game in their World Cup round of 32 against Paraguay or risk going home, with their top players yet to peak at the tournament and expectations back home of a deep run in the competition piling pressure on the team.

The four-time world champions came into the World Cup on a nine-match winning run and demolished Curacao 7-1 in their Group E opener before snatching a stoppage-time win against Ivory Coast to secure top spot and a place in the knockout stage for the first time in 12 years.

They came into the tournament on the back of first-round exits in the 2018 and 2022 World Cups and looked set for a 12th straight win before a shock 2-1 loss to Ecuador in their last group match snapped their streak and instantly raised alarm bells among their fans.

It also cast doubts over coach Julian Nagelsmann's pre-tournament confidence they could go all the way. Their biggest names in the squad -- Florian Wirtz, Jamal Musiala and Kai Havertz -- have so far failed to live up to expectations, delivering largely below-par performances, especially in the last two matches. Substitute Deniz Undav is Germany's top scorer with three goals so far.

"To reach the very big goals we know the players, who have developed into world-class players in the past couple of years, they have to deliver. That's clear. The players know there is room for improvement," Germany team director Rudi Voeller said in a press conference on Saturday. "We have to go to the limit."

Asked when the trio was expected to hit top form, Voeller said it would happen soon.

Germany's Kai Havertz needs to up his game when they take on Paraguay in the last-32 clash. REUTERS

Spicy Morocco take on icy Netherlands

MONTERREY, REUTERS

Star-laden Morocco and the Netherlands have the potential to produce a riveting Round of 32 tie at the World Cup, underpinned by a societal subtext that adds a healthy spice to the game in Monterrey on Monday.

There is a large degree of familiarity, even if the countries have only played each other three times in the past, with Morocco having three Dutch-born players in their side and their top scorer here, Ismael Saibari, playing at PSV Eindhoven.

Morocco have drawn extensively on Dutch expertise over the last decade to build a team which reached the semifinals at the last World Cup and have again impressed by finishing in second place behind Brazil in Group C but only on goal difference.

Ismael Saibari

Brian Brobbey

Morocco amassed seven points, beating Scotland and Haiti, and played with more pressing intensity and intelligent movement to suggest they are going to be hard to overcome. "I'm not sure if we're the favourites in the match against Morocco. It's a good team with a lot of quality and they can score easily," Dutch coach Ronald Koeman said.,

The Netherlands started their campaign slowly but are also looking in good form.

George Russell

Russell holds off Verstappen to claim Austrian Grand Prix

SPIELBERG (AUSTRIA), AFP: George Russell returned to winning ways after a series of disappointments on Sunday when he claimed a measured victory for Mercedes ahead of Red Bull's four-time champion Max Verstappen in a thrilling Austrian Grand Prix.

The 28-year-old Briton, the pre-season favourite for the drivers' title and winner of the opening race, secured his second win of the year and the seventh of his career in a close race, declared to be a 'heat hazard' event, at the Red Bull Ring circuit.

Russell came home 1.611 seconds ahead of a charging Verstappen who in turn resisted championship leader Kimi Antonelli, in the second Mercedes, to finish 0.375 seconds in front of him as they crossed the line.

McLaren's Oscar Piastri was fourth, 20 seconds adrift, ahead of seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton of Ferrari, Isack Hadjar in the second Red Bull and world champion Lando Norris in the second McLaren.

Charles Leclerc was eighth in the second Ferrari ahead of the two Red Bulls of Liam Lawson and rookie Arvid Lindblad.

"It's beautiful to be back on the top step," said Russell.

"It's been a while so I'm definitely going to enjoy this one tonight. Max and Red Bull were incredibly quick this weekend, so kudos to them. I had to push every single lap -- and I'm looking forward to a drink now."

Russell's win trimmed Antonelli's advantage ahead of him in the title race by 10 points to 40.

Srikanth marches into US Open final

FULLERTON (USA), PTI: Star Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth edged out Japan's Yudai Okimoto in a three-game thriller to progress to the men's singles final of the US Open Super 300 badminton championships here.

Srikanth, a 2021 world championships silver medallist, recorded a 22-20, 15-21, 21-19 win over World No. 33 Okimoto in 72 minutes to enter his first final of the season.

Srikanth, a former world No. 1, will meet World No 46 Su Li Yang of Chinese Taipei in the summit clash.

Young shuttler Rounak Chouhan's dream run at his maiden Super 300 tournament ended with a 17-21 19-21 loss to Su Li Yang in the other men's singles semifinal.

In the women's singles, sixth seed Devika Sihag, who won the Thailand Masters earlier this year, fell to Denmark's second seed Line Christophersen 21-15, 11-21, 15-21 in a 54-minute semifinals.

◆ ON TV ◆

CRICKET

3rd Test: England vs New Zealand (day 5, 3:30 pm). **LIVE** on **Sony Sports Network.**

1st Test: West Indies vs Sri Lanka (day 5, 7:30 pm). **LIVE** on **FanCode.**

Maharaja T20 Trophy: Gulbarga Mystics vs Hubli Tigers (**2:30 pm**), Bengaluru Blasters vs Coastal Kings Mangaluru (**7 pm**). **LIVE** on **FanCode.**

TENNIS

Wimbledon: Round 1 (**3:30 pm**). **LIVE** on **Star Sports Network, JioHotstar.**

CRICKET T20 WORLD CUP

Shaky India shown the exit door

Perry, Gardner shine in Australia's six-wicket win

Ellyse Perry scored a brilliant fifty to help Australia beat India by six wickets at Lord's in London on Sunday. AP/PTI

LONDON, PTI

Ellyse Perry oozed class and Ashleigh Gardner was all muscle as Australia notched up a smooth six-wicket win to knock an underwhelming India out of the ICC T20 Women's World Cup here on Sunday. The defeat could well mean the end of Harmanpreet Kaur's time as India's T20 skipper.

Perry (56, 38b) who is playing her 10th World Cup, and Gardner (53 not out, 29b), added 100 runs for the fourth wicket as the six-time champions chased down 171 in 19 overs to enter the semifinals.

The Aussies (10 points) topped Group 1 with an all-win record, while 50-over champions India ended third with six points.

South Africa also progressed to the last four with eight points after they defeated Bangladesh by four wickets earlier in the day.

However, the Aussies were staring at the wrong end of the barrel at 68 for three in 9.1 overs after the Indian bowlers dislodged openers Phoebe Litchfield, Georgia Voll and veteran Beth Mooney for precious little.

Voll, in fact, fell in the first over itself, failing to negotiate Renuka Singh delivery that jagged back sharply.

But thereafter, Perry and Gardner took apart the Indian bowlers with ease. They summoned years of vast experience to pick their bowlers and spots on the field to amass runs without taking undue risks.

Gardner punished left-arm spinner Sree Charani and Shafali Verma for sixes, while Perry was more subtle in her ways.

The 35-year-old pulled and cut Sree Charani, Shafali and Deepti Sharma with ease and her knock was studded with eight fours.

But the effect was the same as Perry reached her fifty in 33 balls and Gardner in four balls less.

Perry fell to Sree Charani, this tournament's highest wicket-taker, eventually but by then the Aussies had their one foot on the shores. Earlier, skipper Harmanpreet Kaur made a quick 56 off 27 balls but rest of the line-up struggled for acceleration as India posted a slightly under par 170 for four, perfectly mirroring their batting group's struggle all along this ICC showpiece.

India did start well through openers Smriti Mandhana (38) and Shafali Verma (34), who added 66 runs but safety appeared their first concern rather than scoring fast as the run-rate never really went above 7.

There were occasional flares of aggression like Shafali's two sixes off off-spinner Ashleigh Gardner or Mandhana's successive fours off pacer Kim Garth. India finished the power play at a rather fine 43 for no loss, but could have really stepped on the gas from that point. Shafali understood the need to change the gear, but her attempt to carve Australian skipper Sophie Molineux brought in disastrous results.

SEMIS LINE-UP

- Australia vs West Indies (June 30), England vs South Africa (July 2).

SCORE BOARD

INDIA

Smriti (run out)	38
Shafali b Molineux	34
Jemimah retired out	34
Harmanpreet c Perry b Molineux	56
Richa (not out)	1
Deepti (not out)	4
Extras (W-3)	3.
TOTAL (for 4 wkts, 20 overs)	**170**

Fall of wickets: 1-66, 2-83, 3-147, 4-166.

Bowling: Lucy Hamilton 3-0-17-0, Kim Garth 3-0-24-0, Ashleigh Gardner 2-0-25-0, Ellyse Perry 1-0-7-0, Georgia Wareham 3-0-16-0, Annabel Sutherland 4-0-35-0, Sophie Molineux 4-0-46-2.

AUSTRALIA

Voll lbw Renuka	4
Mooney c Yadav b Sharma	22
Litchfield c Mandhana b Charani	24
Perry c Shafali b Charani	56
Gardner (not out)	53
Wareham (not out)	4
Extras (W-4, LB-3, NB-2)	9
TOTAL (for 4 wkts, 19 overs)	**172**

Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-54, 3-68, 4-168.

Bowling: Renuka Singh 4-0-41-1, Kranti Gaud 1-0-12-0, Shafali Verma 4-0-29-0, Shree Charani 4-0-32-2, Deepti Sharma 4-0-31-1, Radha Yadav 2-0-24-0.

Result: Australia won by six wickets.

PoM: Ellyse Perry

Brief scores: Bangladesh: 117/5 in 20 overs (Sobhana Mostary 42, Nigar Sultana 32; Nonkululeko Mlaba 2-22) lt to South Africa: 118/6 in 19.2 overs (Annerie Dercksen 45; Nahida Akter 2-24). **Result:** SA won by four wickets. **PoM:** Marizanne Kapp

England knock out defending champions New Zealand

LONDON, AFP: England hammered New Zealand by nine wickets on Saturday to end the defending champions' involvement at this year's Women's T20 World Cup.

New Zealand knew they had to beat England, already into the semifinals, to reach the knockout phase after being handed a lifeline by Ireland, ending their long wait for a T20 World Cup win with victory over the West Indies earlier in the day.

England made light of a target of 163 by equalling the highest successful run chase in Women's T20 World Cup history with 16 balls to spare at the Oval.

Danni Wyatt-Hodge (89 not out) and Sophia Dunkley (49 not out) shared a partnership of 128 as tournament hosts England made it five wins out of five at this edition.

England's win saw the West Indies into the last four as Group B runners-up.

It also signalled the end of New Zealand greats Sophie Devine, Suzie Bates and Lea Tahuhu's international careers after the trio had previously announced they would retire after the World Cup.

Brief scores: New Zealand: 163/6 in 20 overs (Melie Kerr 42, Isabella Gaze 28, Sophie Devine 30; Dani Gibson 2-30) lt to England: 164/1 in 17.3 overs (Danni Wyatt-Hodge 89, Sophia Dunkley 49 n.o.) by 9 wkts.

BR Rathan

Coastal Kings cruise past Yodhas

BENGALURU, DHNS: Coastal Kings Mangaluru scored an emphatic eight-wicket victory (VJD target) over Shivamogga Yodhas in the DACSS Maharaja Trophy KSCA T20 tournament on Sunday in Hubballi.

The match was reduced to 17 overs a side during the first innnings, due to rain. Batting first, Yodhas could manage only 113 for eight in their 17 overs as their batting proved brittle yet again and that led to their second successive defeat.

For the winners, who reached the revised target with utmost comfort in just 12.4 overs losing just two wickets, veteran medium pacer Vasuki Koushik (2/15) did the early damage with a double blow in his second over while 17-year-old debutant B R Rathan (3/16) broke the lower-order.

Brief scores: Shivamogga Yodhas: 113/8 in 17 overs (Luvnith Sisodia 35, Harshil Dharmani 28; Vasuki Koushik 2-15, Rathan BR 3-16) lt to Coastal Kings Mangaluru: 118/2 in 12.4 overs (M Venkatesh 45, Nikin Jose 31; Bheem Rao Navale 2-24).

Weather forces India A vs SL A tie to end in draw

GALLE, PTI: Devdutt Padikkal hit a patient fifty in India A's second innings as the opening Test against Sri Lanka A ended in a tame draw with weather disrupting the proceedings on the fourth and final day here on Sunday.

Resuming their second innings at 48 for no loss, Padikkal made 67 off 101 balls with the help of five boundaries, while Ayush Pandey (38) and Harsh Dubey (29) also made useful contributions as India A declared their second innings 189 for 8 in 57 overs, setting Sri Lanka A a target of 312.

Left-arm spinner Dilum Sudeera scalped five wickets for 49 runs for Sri Lanka A in India A's second innings.

In the pursuit, Sri Lanka A managed 70 for 2 in 15 overs with rain halting the play for a significant amount of time.

Opener Pawantha Weerasinghe (10 off 19), Nuwanidu Fernando (16 not out) and Ashen Bandara (18 not out) were the run getters for Sri Lanka A in their second essay.

Brief scores: India A: 452/6 decl & (O/n: 48/0) 189/8 decl in 57 overs (Ayush Pandey 38, Devdutt Padikkal 67, Harsh Dubey 29; Dilum Sudeera 5-49) drew with Sri Lanka A: 330 all out & 70/2 in 15 overs.

Ireland complete historic sweep

Moondra, Tector help hosts whitewash India 2-0

Ireland put on a briliant all-round display to beat India by a run and take the two-match T20I series 2-0. X

BELFAST, PTI

Jai Moondra, a software engineer from Rajasthan's Tonk, rocked a star-studded batting line-up filled with IPL stars as Ireland did the unthinkable, shocking reigning T20 World Champions India by one-run to complete a historic 2-0 series win here on Sunday.

It is easily the greatest moment in Irish cricket since Kevin O'Brien's epochal century when they beat England in the 2011 ODI World Cup.

But humbling of the mighty India will certainly be at a different level for them.

In a slightly nippy, blustery conditions, Moondra (3/32 in 4 overs), who still holds an Indian passport, removed Sanju Samson (0), Abhishek Sharma (0) for first-ball ducks with icing on the cake being skipper Shreyas Iyer's wicket.

India managed only 153 for 9, chasing 155 at the Stormont ground on an eventful Sunday, after the hosts made 154 for eight. Towards the end, Harshit Rana (21 off 10 balls) tried his best before being dismissed off the penultimate delivery of the match.

The series defeat also put a stop to India's 16 T20I series winning streak that started mid 2023.

Under mercurial head coach Gautam Gambhir, Indian men's cricket team has achieved some embarrassing firsts. After a home 0-3 whitewash in Tests against New Zealand in 2024 and a first ODI series defeat against New Zealand in early 2026, getting completely annihilated by a minnow is one of the lowest ebbs that one could have hit.

Once it became 19 for 3, it was always a catch-up game for India.While Tilak Varma (55 off 46 balls) respected the conditions where the ball was swinging and seaming.

SCOREBOARD

IRELAND

Tector c Abhishek b Rana	5
Adair c Tilak b Arshdeep	16
Tector c Kishan b Prince	53
Tucker c Kishan b Prince	15
Calitz c Tilak b Dube	37
Delany b Dube	0
Dockrell c Axar b Arshdeep	19
McCarthy c Kishan b Prince	2
Moondra (not out)	1
Extras (LB-2, NB-1, W-3)	6
TOTAL (for 8 wkts, 20 overs)	**154**

Fall of wickets: 1-17, 2-21, 3-48, 4-113, 5-113, 6-144, 7-153, 8-154.

Bowling: Arshdeep 4-0-35-2, Rana 3-0-17-1, Prince 4-0-22-3, Dube 3-0-25-2, Shedge 2-0-25-0, Axar 4-0-28-0.

INDIA

Samson lbw Moondra	0
Abhishek c Hollard b Moondra	0
Kishan (run out)	12
Shreyas b Moondra	10
Tilak c McCarthy b Hollard	55
Axar c Tucker b Hollard	14
Dube c Dockrell b Humphreys	20
Shedge c Tector b Hollard	1
Harshit c Tector b Harry	21
Arshdeep (not out)	4
Prince (not out)	6
Extras (W-4, LB-1, B-1, LB-4)	10
TOTAL (for 9 wkts, 20 overs)	**153**

Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-1, 3-19, 4-35, 5-74, 6-109, 7-117, 8-121, 9-147.

Bowling: Moondra 4-0-32-3, Humphreys 4-0-28-1, Hollard 4-0-26-3, McCarthy 4-0-22-0, Tector 4-0-40-1.

Result: Ireland won by 1 run. **PoM:** Jai Moondra. **PoS:** Jai Moondra. **Series:** Ireland won 2-match series 2-0.

Stokes to retire from intl cricket

NOTTINGHAM (UK), AFP

Ben Stokes has announced his retirement as England Test captain and from international cricket, the England and Wales Cricket Board said in a statement issued Sunday.

Stokes will end his England career following the conclusion of the ongoing third Test against New Zealand in Nottingham.

As news spread of the 35-year-old all-rounder's decision, he received a standing ovation from the crowd at Trent Bridge and there were more cheers shortly afterwards when he dismissed New Zealand's Zak Foulkes on the fourth day of the third and deciding Test of a three-match series.

Sunday's announcement came after Stokes returned to England duty at Trent Bridge after being omitted from a 253-run defeat in the second Test at the Oval for breaking a midnight curfew, alongside teammate Gus Atkinson, while celebrating at a London nightclub following the first-Test win over New Zealand.

Ben Stokes

NZ take control on emotional day

England captain Ben Stokes was dismissed for an explosive 20-ball 30 in his final innings as New Zealand left Trent Bridge on the cusp of delivering one of the country's great series victories, with England reaching stumps on 103/4 after 15 overs and still needing 270 runs.

Brief scores: New Zealand: 438 all out & (O/n: 120/3): 288/9 decl in 94 overs (Rachin Ravindra 94, Daryl Mitchell 100 n.o.; Jofra Archer 4-53, Gus Atkinson 2-50, Ben Stokes 2-49) vs England: 354 all out & 103/4 in 15 overs (Ben Duckett 36, Ben Stokes 30; Zak Foulkes 3-42).

Smarting Sinner the man to beat as Sabalenka eyes glory on grass

LONDON, REUTERS

Wimbledon begins on Monday, with defending champion Jannik Sinner chasing a fifth Grand Slam title and women's top seed Aryna Sabalenka chasing her first major of the year.

In the absence of rival and two-time Wimbledon winner Carlos Alcaraz, Sinner is the clear favourite this year, but the Italian may have to contend with the hot weather and his own lack of preparation as he seeks to defend his title. After his second-round defeat at the French Open from a near-winning position when he cramped up in sizzling conditions, the 24-year-old skipped the warm-up tournaments ahead of the grasscourt Slam.

He said this could work to his benefit, however, ahead of his opening clash with Serbian Miomir Kecmanovic on Monday.

"If you play a tournament before here, maybe it's not going the way you would like to, you come here with some doubts," he told reporters on Saturday.

"If you don't play any tournament, you don't have these doubts, you just go and play."

Sabalenka has been at the top of the WTA rankings since late 2024, but the Belarusian has only won one Grand Slam title in the past 18 months, despite reaching four finals. She also suffered a collapse against Diana Shnaider in the French Open quarterfinals last month, losing the last 10 games in a row.

Top seeds, Italy's Jannik Sinner (left) and Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka, have their task cut out at Wimbledon, which kicks off in blistering London on Monday. REUTERS/ AFP

LIVE 3:30 PM, STAR SPORTS

She said after that she wanted to "quit tennis" but has since worked with a psychologist and said she was not affected as much by losing to Jessica Pegula in this month's Berlin Open semifinals.

"I felt really good throughout the tournament there. I struggled a little bit here and there, (but) overall I feel like things are clicking back together," she told reporters ahead of her opening match against Teodora Kostovic.

The four-time major champion has never won Wimbledon, but she has reached the semifinals in her last three appearances.

Novak Djokovic has spent the last 2-1/2 years trying to capture a 25th major crown that would see him overtake Margaret Court. Wimbledon could be his best bet for achieving that.

Since he won his seventh Wimbledon title in 2022, the Serb has reached two finals and a semifinal at the All England Club. The 39-year-old, who last played in a five-set loss to Brazilian Joao Fonseca at the French Open, told reporters he was better prepared for Wimbledon than he was at Roland Garros.

"Playing on grass, comparing to clay, you don't need to exert as much physical effort. So that's better for me," he added.

"I always loved playing on grass. I have a very good score here, history, in Wimbledon. That gives me a higher dose of confidence coming into the tournament."

Chunggoulen stars in ZIFA victory

BENGALURU, DHNS: Chunggoulen Khawbung scored four goals while Kamgoulen Khongsai netted a brace as Zenit International FA trounced Revolt FC 7-0 in the KSFA D Division League Championship at the Bangalore Football Stadium here on Sunday.

LOCAL FOOTBALL

Results: Amey FC: 1 (Karma Lama 1st) bt Elite Soccer FC: 0; Powerplay FC: 3 (Aravind P Biju 27th, Sujith Kumar V 31st, 35th) bt VPS Football: 0; Mercurial FC: 6 (Mithil Janardhan J 8th, Adhil 14th, Joshuva 20th, Vishnu Vinod N 27th, 50th, Dhanraj P 38th) bt KGF FC: 0; William Sportz FC: 2 (Demnil Son S 18th, 38th) bt FC Real Bengaluru: 0; TFF: 4 (Sarvesh 34th, Albert 36th, Albert K 35th) bt Plan FC: 1 (Dhanjay Choudary 24th); Zenit Intl FA: 7 (Chunggoulen:Khawbung 9th, 10th, 17th, 41st, Kamgoulen Khongsai 13th, 37th pen, R Menush 16th) bt Revolt FC: 0; Mysore United FC: 0 drew with Gajendranagar FC: 0; Premier Sporting FA: 3 (Zuhar Ullah Shariff 19th, 20th, Manginlen Haokip 38th) bt Spodemy FC: 1 (Akbar Basha 28th).

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